

## TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY VALUES: A QUALITATIVE SURVEY

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This qualitative case study is aimed to explore teachers' understanding of family values. The respondents consist of five secondary school teachers, who teach five subjects that cover family themes. The process of collecting data is obtained by using semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. Issues of validity and reliability of the study are resolved by using four methods, namely triangulation, peer review, audit trail and prolonged engagement. Atlas.ti software is used to analyse the transcription of interviews and develop the theme in this study. The findings show that family values understood by the teachers are in reference to good values, good manners and culture of life. Teachers' understanding of family values is closely related to the aspects of family and community life. Therefore, inculcation of family values should be given priority and attention by all parties, especially teachers and parents.

**Keywords:** family values, family-life education, teachers' understanding.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) *via* the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB2013-2025) has a thorough planning to ensure the role of family is given the highest priority in order to promote unity and harmony among Malaysians. MOE's priority is to provide family-life education program so that parents and communities can enhance their respective roles. This is a continuation of National Education Philosophy, which aims to produce balanced students, where its implementation should be monitored. As such, an advisable and continuous approach should be taken by the government to ensure that one of the Vision 2020 challenges of creating a society with caring culture can be achieved. The challenge is to create a social system that is more concerned with people than themselves, and prioritizing the welfare of the people, which is not only based on individual or country, but a strong and robust family system (Mahathir, 1991).

In Malaysian education context, the component of family-life education is taught across the curriculum. The subjects that cover family themes are Home Economics Education, Moral Education, Physical and Health Education, Civics

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and Citizenship Education, as well as Islamic Education. Through this cross-curriculum approach, it is hoped that each student will receive appropriate exposure on family aspects by at least one of the five subjects provided. Research by Rahimah (2012) on the details of Malaysian secondary school syllabus for the five subjects found that, a student will learn three to four subjects covering family aspects per year.

This indicates that Muslims students will learn the aspects of family-life education about 17.1% to 24.3% per year, while non-Muslim students receive exposure on family-life education about 21.4% to 28.6% per year. Not surprisingly, the small percentage of family aspects would result in negative perception among the society, which assumes that the inculcation of family values is not important. Hence, teachers who teach Family Education need to meet this challenge in order to ensure the topic is given attention not only by teachers and students, but also by society and the ministry.

Consequently, the government gives an emphasis on the aspects of moral values. This is clearly stated in the handbook of Inculcation of Values across the Curriculum (Curriculum Development Centre, 2005). These actions demonstrate that the government is being concerned and sensitive towards the aspect of instilling moral and family values among school students. Facing the challenges of the present era of technological development, there is an urgent need to provide students with adequate knowledge of family-life education so that they are prepared to enter adulthood. Therefore, teachers play an important role in inculcating positive values to students in order to produce citizens who are not only responsible, but with high ethics and moral as well. Hence, this paper will investigate teachers' understanding of family values that is applied in teaching.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Family is a basic unit of society in which there exists an interaction between husband and wife, and their children. Begins with family, each individual plays an important role in forming noble characters, because it is from good personalities that harmonious and happy family can be developed. Endang Purwaningsih (2010) described family as a household member who is related by blood or marriage. According to Anshubhi and Nisha (2008), family is a group of people who live in a household and have a consistent and strong relationship.

From the Islamic viewpoint, definition for family is very broad. A family does not only consist of father, mother and children, but also is inclusive of grandparents, siblings and other relatives. In fact, the family can even be much wider because not only consists of one family, but probably more since Islam allows polygamy. These principles are described in the Quran and Sunnah through Surah an-Nisa (4) verse 1, which means:

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.”

Forming a harmonious family is very important to maintain the continuity of human generation (Syahrul Riza, 2008). Failure to establish family institution will lead to the destruction of a society because family plays a role in guiding children to behave according to the principles and values of social expectations surrounding community (Azrina Jonit, 2004). Basic life begins at home. The experience of socializing in the family gives a great influence on child development (Epstein, 2011). Family shapes the color of a child's life, good behavior, manners and even daily habitual customs. This is in agreement with the Moral Education according to Imam al-Ghazali, who elaborated the life and moral of Salafus Saalih (Pious Predecessors) that should be emulated. Thus, the role of family members is very important in preserving morals, ethics and human dignity through strong family ties in order to achieve happiness and harmony in life (Hamdani and Saifuddin, 2006).

Value refers to the significance, quality and value of a thing, matter or phenomenon that exists in this universe (Hussin, 1995). According to Islamic perspective, value is absolute, always permanent, constant and real. Whilst, God is the source of all values (Nik Azis, 1996). Value is a formation of behavior that involves moral and behavioral changes resulting from interaction with the environment (Bandura and McDonald, 1963). Value can be likened to a all that reflects individual personality (Mohd. Azhar, Azmi Shah, and Muhamad Fauzi, 2001). This means that human behavior is influenced by two main values, namely the value that exists naturally, and the value that is built from the experience of interaction with the environment (Flouri, Tsivrikos, Akhtar, and Midouhas, 2015).

Family values refer to the value resulting from a system, attitudes and beliefs, which consciously or otherwise, very necessary to unite family members in one culture (Armin Mahmoudi, 2012). Family values according to Abdullah, Salleh, Mahmud, and Ghani (2010), are a guideline for the development of norms and rules within the family. According to western perspective, family values are hugely influenced by social learning theory that has been elaborated by Bandura (1963). Bandura said that action is the result of the interaction of three factors, namely human, environmental and human nature. Ahlström ( 2009) suggested some association of family institution, namely: commitment, rules and system of trust, purpose of life and responsibility. Thus, according to Husin ( 2011), social problems in the community should be curbed from the beginning, starting from the role of each member of the family itself. This is because the function of socialization in building children's self esteem in the family is diminishing. To produce a harmonious and prosperous family, the parent's role as a role model to the children

should not be passed over to domestic helper or someone else. At home, the responsibility as family leader should be fulfilled by parents. At school on the other hand, the responsibility to inculcate family values is transferred to teachers in imparting knowledge and applying values to students (Baratz and Reingold, 2013).

Family-life education is the only education that gives direct exposure to the students on family system. According to Rahimah and Roselan (2009), family-life education is introduced with the purpose of providing individuals with the family knowledge and skills needed so that they can cope with social changes in the family and society. Young generation nowadays need to be nurtured to have a strong sense of identity in order to prevent teenagers from being involved in immoral social activities. Edification of values in students is very significant with the current needs so that they can generate their ability to develop a healthy and quality family institution in future. Family-life education is related directly to the affective domain (Rahimah, 2012). Thus, the elements of attitude, awareness, emotion and principle really need to be cultivated and nourished to develop moral thinking and humanitarian aspects in students (Amla, Zahara, Zuria, and Abd Aziz, 2010).

The understanding of family needs to be embedded and taught to students as young as seven years old (Bruder, 2010). Students' understanding of family values in particular needs to be emphasized to enable values to be absorbed and practiced in daily life. Without inculcation of values and a correct understanding of family, could lead to various problems in society. For example, children need to be taught the values of compassion and care towards their parents. If the value is missing in a child, this will contribute to the problem of neglecting responsibilities towards parents because he or she is not aware that the welfare of parents is the primary responsibility of sons and daughters. Based on the research carried out by Rahimah (2009) in exploring university students' understanding of family, she found that the majority of respondents interviewed were unable to list out their role as a child in a family. This finding indicates how important it is to inculcate and instil the knowledge and values of family into the younger generation (Rahimah, 2009). Since, they are the main asset in forming new community and country in future. Therefore, teachers as educators must first have a clear and deep understanding of family values.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used a qualitative method with case study design (single case of multiple places) to examine teaching and learning process carried out by secondary school teachers in teaching family-life education. Researcher used qualitative methods since inculcation of family values is a complex process, which requires a clear and comprehensive description Creswell (2014) to understand a phenomenon studied

(McMillan, 2004). The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. Informants of the study consisted of five experienced teachers teaching in secondary schools. Informants came from different locations, but had the same characteristics. Informants were interviewed in depth by using semi-structured questions to answer research questions.

#### **4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

##### **4.1 Teachers' Understanding of Family Values**

To explore the informants' understanding of family values, data gathered were analysed using Altas.ti software. Preliminary finding showed that five of the informants had a similar understanding with regard to family values. The informants stated that family values were referring to good values.

“A good value is to be taught by parents to children continuously.” (GPM, TM3/030)

“Good values which are based on religion. Must be internalized and practiced in forming children's personality.” (GPK, TM3/027)

“Good value should be a life guide, and a good value should be trained at home and practised repeatedly.” (GPI, TM2/024)

“Good values are also family values, and should be carried out continuously; in order to have a noble, good-mannered, and kind-hearted child with great personality.” (GPSK, TM3/021)

It can be concluded that the informants understanding of family values is in reference to the good values which are based on religion to bring changes in children's behavior. Good or positive values must be trained repeatedly and continuously, either directly or indirectly. Inculcating good values is important in order to have a noble, good-mannered, and kind-hearted child with great personality. Good values need to be established as daily practices because repetition and habits will shape children's moral and character. These noble values also serve as guidance for the children to survive in the future (Bandura and McDonald, 1963).

Finding is in line with Abdul Rahim and Azharul Nizam (2010) research. The interpretations of their respondents about values were the same. Values that are instilled in teaching and learning can provide positive implication on character building among students. Azhanie Omar (2008) stated that the application of good values is necessary for building the desired value in students. In her study, she found that undergraduate students of Technical and Vocational Education have a clear understanding on the needs to inculcate good values even in doing practical work in workshops. School administrators need to strengthen efforts to highlight

the importance of noble values in creating good atmosphere and positive school culture. Proactive teacher's role in the effort of instilling values should be encouraged for the edification of balanced student's moral in parallel with the requirement of National Education Philosophy (Asmawati Suhid, 2007; Mohamad Khairi Othman and Asmawati Suhid, 2010).

Apart from the meaning of good values, the informants also interpreted family values as character or behavior. For them, good behavior is an act that needs to be taught in a family. Good manners according to the informants refer to behaviors expressed through natural actions, and without any pressures, but by the willingness of the individuals themselves. Islamic Education teachers view morals from the perspective of Islamic religion. Of course, such behavior is associated with the life that is guiding the children to live on by emulating Prophet Muhammad as an example.

*"Religion is morals. Good morals lead to a good path."* (GPI, TM2/024)

Meanwhile, Health Education teacher also believes family values as good manners being practice by each family member. Not only that, he hopes that the instilled values would be able to produce human capital with characteristics of righteous servant of God.

*"Good manners that are practised by every family member can produce a man who has the characteristics of righteous servant of God."* (GPK, TM3 / 027)

These findings support Asmawati's (2007) opinion about the interpretation of good character. She stated that education cannot be taught separately from moral values. Accordingly, religious teachers need to emphasize moral aspects as an effort to produce human with noble characteristics (Kamarul Mutminah and Zuliza, 2015). Findings of Nur Aeni (2001) also supported the clear definition that is outlined in Moral Education according to Imam Al-Ghazali, in which moral education is the highest level of virtue to attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith. Clearly, the moral education school of thought according to Imam Al-Ghazali truly adheres to the meaning of value inculcation in terms of moral development in the teaching of manners, a good element in fostering good thoughts and fulfills the characteristics that help to elevate the internalization of moral in oneself (Asmawati, 2006; Nur Aeni, 2001; Sarimah, Mohd Kashfi, Ab. Halim, and Kamarulzaman, 2011). These findings are also consistent with the characteristics of noble human capital as aspired by the Ministry of Education Malaysia in developing a balanced and harmonious future citizen.

Other than that, informants also interpreted the meaning of family values as related to culture or family life rules. According to the informant, challenges in

educating children should be wisely addressed by parents in shaping and disciplining them. This was stated by the Home Economics teacher that family values are:

“A rule or life cultures that need to be practiced daily.” (GERT, TM3 / 027)

Meanwhile, Civic and Citizenship Education teacher correlated her understanding of family values as element of manners or culture within Islam. Guided by the Islamic way of life, parents can educate or train their children according to a proper rule.

“...highly correlated with religious values. For example, rules such as being hygienic and respect for elders.”(GPSK, TM3/021)

This finding is consistent with Mohd Zailani (2012) finding that associated the process of instilling moral values with nurturing a positive culture that builds identity among secondary students. Similarly, Buerah and Hussin (2011) interpreted that culture and civilization are closely interlinked with the act of inculcating moral and values. While, Mary Basil (2013) said that family acts as start-up agents to the formation of values that shape the culture of children's life.

In conclusion, the fundamental values in family need to be incorporated into students starting from the beginning so that these values will become their culture and part of their life. Only then, values will be able to transform the students to become positive individuals. These individuals will then be known as responsible family members, respectful students towards their teachers, members of the community that contribute to the harmony of the society, and further become the human capital that can bring prosperity to the country (Ab Halim, Mohamad, and Ajuhary, 2010; Baharom, 2009; Thomas and Lien, 2009).

Implementation of family values is important to ensure the formation of youth is comprehensive, balanced and in line with the National Education Philosophy, which emphasizes not only on the aspect of intellectual development alone, but the aspects of physical, emotional and spiritual development are also required to be given priority (Marzuki, 2008; Mohamad Johdi and Suhaila, 2012). In addition, inculcation of family values can also create a loving family and bring happiness in family (Ratna Roshida and Nik Haslinda, 2007). This is because continuous inculcation of family values can serve as a defensive wall to save the society from social diseases such as the collapse of family institution, the issue of drug abuse and teen violence (Badrulzaman, 2006; Davenport, 2014).

These findings also support the education theory according to Imam Al Ghazali regarding embedment of morals behavior which happens naturally and cannot be shaken by the pressure of life. This study also supports Moral Development Theory proposed by (Kohlberg, 1984). highlighted teachers as the most second important

individual after parents in guiding students going through the stages of development successfully. Clearly, it is important for a parent to have knowledge and awareness towards inculcation of family values. Plus, responsibility of teachers in assisting parents to make their children as balanced human being through moral education. Therefore, students need to be nurtured, guided and taught to make them becomes admirably competent and moral human capitals (Abdul Rahim and Azharul Nizam, 2010; Azrina Jonit, 2004).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Teachers' understanding of family values is very important because teacher is the second most important socialization agent to students after their parents. Undoubtedly, the task of delivering and inculcating family values to students, especially the *Y* and *Z* generation, is not easy. Teachers need to be more creative in designing teaching and learning to attract students' interest, and ensure that the inculcation of family values can be smoothly executed in order to prepare students for future challenges and social crisis. The findings show that teachers have a clear understanding of family values. In fact, teachers also have a high level of awareness towards the importance of inculcating family values to students in supporting the National Education Philosophy and the National Education Blueprint (MEB2013-2025). The results obtained show that the steps taken by Ministry of Education Malaysia in implementing family values across the curriculum are highly desirable and should be continued. Even though the percentage of family-life education in secondary school curricula is very small, this small percentage is able to give a significant contribution in developing first class human capital. Therefore, teachers who teach family-life education should equip themselves with a variety of knowledge related to family-life education from time to time.

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