Character Value in Japanese Early Childhood Formed through Hajimete No Osaka (First Errand)

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Hajimete no Otsukai (first errand) is a reality show that has been broadcast since 1991 by Nihon Terebi (Nittele or Nittere in Japanese). Japanese Parents give this first errand to children who have never managed alone without their parents' assistance since they were born. Usually, Parents give this errand to children who are still under the age of five to exercise courage, independence, and responsibility . The child is given a task under his abilities. While carrying out his first assignment, many character traits appear to be formed by completing this errand. Those character traits are caring, independence, discipline, creativity, cooperation, responsibility, hard work, friendliness and communication, tolerance, and care for the environment.

Key words: *Character Value, Early Childhood, First errand.*

Introduction

The character can be defined in various ways and used in different ways in common speech (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). A character can also be considered as a behavioural element that emphasises somatopsikis elements possessed by a human being (Rokhman, Hum, Syaifudin, & Yuliati, 2014).

Character education for early childhood is crucial because it will be the children's character foundation, and it will apply in the children's lifetime (Delalibera & Ferreira, 2019). Early childhood is the moment of a lifetime that children can absorb any education quickly. Education at a childhood age is a factor that determines the quality of a person when he was growing up (Ferdiawan & Putra, 2013). The children and the youth who will ensure the continuity of the society should have good characters in addition to knowledge (Ülger, Yiğittir, & Ercan, 2014). The character education of the early childhood area deals with

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many dimensions (Mei-Ju, Chen-Hsin, & Pin-Chen, 2014).

Parents in Japan teach or grow good character in children by showing it or letting their children feel and experience daily, and by social activities that can foster the right attitude in the child. Since they were born to the world, those children have no experience of doing a chore that must be done alone without their parents. *Hajimete no otsukai*, according to Wikipedia, is a television show in Japan, a reality show that has been broadcast since 1991 by Nihon Terebi (Nittele or Nittere in Japanese). Usually, errands on the show are given to young children to train their courage, independence, and responsibility. The children are given an errand under their abilities (Cheung & Lee, 2010). For example, an older brother asked by his mother to help to buy a ref lamp at a store called home centre and pacifier at a drugstore.

The experience of the first errand can develop children's characters and other abilities which are needed as a hard life skill and also a soft skill. (Black et al., 2017) describe childhood development as a maturational and interactive process, resulting in an ordered progression of perceptual, motor, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and self- regulation skills.

Method

The research applies a qualitative descriptive study. The use of a descriptive qualitative research approach in this study aims to describe characters that are formed in early Japanese children through *Hajimete no Otsukai* (first errand). The data resources used in this study are reality show videos about *Hajimete no Otsukai*. The data are the form of verbal output or how the children behave through their first errand that shows the value of character.

Procedure

The following are the procedures that are used to research what characters are formed in early childhood in Japan in children who are carrying out their first assignment.

1) The author has analysed previous studies to find out what character traits are usually attached to a person, then decided on an analysis guide regarding character values.
2) Collected data resources, i.e., *Hajimete no Otsukai* videos.
3) Data collecting. The data collection procedure is carried out through observing videos of the "*Hajimete no Otsukai*" " reality show. Observed data are recorded on a data card to do the classification and analysis.
4) Data classification.
5) Analyzing.

Measures

The obtained data through observation were then classified based on the guidelines. The author made guidelines by combining references (Kim, Choe, & Kaufman, 2019a) and (Fahmy, Bachtiar, Rahim, & Malik, 2015).

Result

After the data is collected, data obtained about the character traits formed in the children from the first assignment is shown in the following table.

Table Character Value

No	Character Value	Example of data
1.	Caring	1. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro, minutes: 1:17 2. Episode: Mio to Rana, at minutes 03:10 3. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (ebi) minutes 07:55
2.	Independent	1. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro minutes 01:43 2. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (Ebi) 3. Episode: Marin to Yotto (Yurikamome) minutes 08:49
3.	Discipline	1. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro minutes 01:43 2. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro minutes 05:44 3. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (ebi) minutes 05:55
4.	Creative	1. Episode: Tenma to kokoro video 2 minutes 02:11 2. Episode: Mio to Rana, at minutes 04:06 3. Episode: Mio to Rana, at minutes 09:32
5.	Cooperative	1. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro video 2 minutes 02:34 2. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (ebi) minutes 09:40 3. Episode: Yuuta to Natsuko (Umi no Ie) minutes 18:32
6.	Responsibilities	1. Episode: Tenma to Kokoro video 2 minutes 03:34 2. Episode: Mio to Rana, at minutes 09:32 3. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (ebi) minutes 02:11
7.	Hard work	1. Episode: Shougo minutes 03:22 2. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (ebi) minutes 14:00 3. Episode: Yuutato Natsuko (Umi no Ie) minutes 18:32
8.	Friendly and communicating	1. Episode: Mio to Rana, at minutes 05:26 2. Episode: Ruri to Moe (Ski) minutes 05:54 3. Episode: Ruri to Moe (Ski) minutes 07:36
9.	Tolerance	1. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (Ebi) minutes 11:39 2. Episode: Nanase to Nonoka (Ebi) minutes 14:00 3. Episode: Marin to Yotto (Yurikamome) minutes 08:28
10.	Care for the environment	Hajimete no Otsukai, Episode: Umi U-tan (Obentou) minutes 06:46

Discussion

Based on the character value data table above, the following is a discussion of each character trait's value.

1. Caring

Care is related to the word kindness. Kindness is considered to be a character of strength falling under the broader virtue of humanity (kindness, love, and social intelligence). Based

on this classification, kindness is generally related to generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, and "niceness" (Yin, Loreman, Majid, & Alias, 2019).

The caring character seen in children from the early childhood age group who are undergoing their first errand can be indicated by examples of a child's caring for his sibling, such as a younger brother who offers to help his brother carry heavy items, a brother who takes his brother home even though he has traveled quite a long distance, because seeing his sister is not possible to continue the journey, a child who accompanied his friend skiing because his friend is not so proficient in skiing.

In the scene of two children skiing, a female child showed empathy (Wang, Wang, Deng, & Chen, 2019) (Levy, Yirmiya, Goldstein, & Feldman, 2019), (Noten, Van der Heijden, Huijbregts, Van Goozen, & Swaab, 2019) when she saw her friend looked afraid to go skiing, and she encourages her by telling her, "I'll accompany you."

The child's care is shown by helping or offering help, refusing offers because they know it will be troublesome, encouraging the other person who is afraid, warning others when the person is in danger, and encouraging the other person who is almost giving up in doing something. The caring attitude shown by these children shows a positive value (Brown, Alderson, Kaner, McGovern, & Lingam, 2019).

2. Independence

Data about the character of independence, includes, for example, scenes about children crossing the road without the help of an adult, with a show of hands and then crossing after the traffic lights show signs of the crossing. In the video's narration, it is mentioned that children memorised this when they walked with their parents, especially their mother. Children develop abstract knowledge, schemas, and judgment towards self and interaction partners from their memory database of daily social experiences (Song, Koh, & Wang, 2018). In another scene, independence appeared in the attitude of a child who refuses his brother's help and tries to carry out what is his duty.

3. Discipline

Japan is indeed famous for its disciplined character. This character trait even appears in children who perform their first errand, such as crossing the road if the traffic lights have shown that sign, obeying instructions in public places, as indicated by a child who opened his shoe after seeing the warning "*Onugikudasai*!" which means, please take off your footwear. Another child obeys his parents when ordered not to buy things that his parents did not order, among other actions that show the child's compliance with the instructions given by his parents, with the realisation that if he is not obedient, it will be dangerous. From the many data examined, some children in the early childhood age range in Japan showed

discipline. Yet according to (Grusec, 2019) most children do not comply with every parental request and there are variations in how much noncompliance different parents are willing to tolerate.

4.   Creativity

Creativity is the ability to give original ideas within a specific context (Celume, Besançon, & Zenasni, 2019). Based on observations of the reality show *Hajimete no Otsuka*, creative processes occur in children when facing difficulties alone without the presence of their parents (Kim, Choe, & Kaufman, 2019b). For example, data are shown in a *Hajimete no Otsukai* Episode: Tenma to Kokoro video 2 minutes to 02:11. Tenma-Kun and Kokoro-chan had to pass through the disinfectant pool, but because his mother did not allow him to enter the pool, the younger brother Kokoro found a way to cross through the narrow edge of the disinfectant pool. This attitude shows the creative nature finding ways to solve a problem.

Creativity can be broadly defined as the ability of the individual to create something new or create a useful new idea (Susanto, Novitasari, & Yusuf, 2018), (Schutte & Malouff, 2020). Yuuta (4 years nine months) and Natsuko (5 years one month) were asked by their parents to deliver used newspapers to their grandfather, who was at the beach house. Because they were heavy and they would need to walk on the sand beach, Yuuta said, *"II koto omoitsuita. Ue ikoo*!"* (I know, let's pass it up). Then he invited Natsuko to take the asphalt road so that their footsteps would not be too heavy. Yuuta's idea required creative thinking and logic from him, just as increasing globalisation requires more people equipped with 21st-century skills (Li, 2016).

5.   Cooperative

Japanese parents place more value on children's cooperation, getting along with others (Matsumoto, Sofronoff, & Sanders, 2007). The character of cooperation appears in the first assignment video involving two brothers or friends. For example, an older brother named Tenma and a younger sister named Kokoro, for the first time, worked together to lift their bags to keep them from water. Cooperation is also demonstrated by the attitude of sharing tasks and beliefs (DeAngelo & McCannon, 2017), for example, a brother lifted up his younger brother to take shrimp from a box that could not be reached by the two of them, because the shrimp that they wanted to take was deep in the cooler box. They decided on a cooperative act after they talked to each other, based on the situation they faced (Köymen & Tomasello, 2018).

6.   Responsibility

Responsible is human awareness toward behaviour or attitude, either consciously or unconsciously. Responsible also means to do something as a form of recognition toward their obligation (Eliasa, 2014). The children who carried out tasks managed to deliver their

father's belongings safely, showing responsibility when asked for help. In other cases, a child returned down the street to look for his fallen belongings. There is also a child who looked after his/her sister/ brother well until they got home. In the last example, a brother realised that his sister's bag was missing , then he went back into the shop and looked for his sister's purse. That child's act shows his responsibility as a brother for his sister's belongings.

7. Hard-working

The Japanese have a "*ganbaru*" mind, which means the spirit to do hard work or "the virtue of endurance" (Mattig, 2013). Therefore the character of hard work is very strong in Japanese people. This character is also shown by early childhood aged children who show they keep trying hard to carry out their first assignment, even though it may be difficult. For example, a child cried, "*Okaachan*!" calling out to his mother when he was getting into trouble. But then he solved the problem even while crying. After that, he continued his journey, and his crying slowly stopped. Even though the reaction was crying, which showed an objection to the child, he still tried and showed the character trait of hard work. Another example is shown in the episode Yuuta to Natsuko (Umi no Ie) minutes 18:32. Because Yuuta joked too much while carrying a box with Natsuko, Natsuko was angry and left Yuuta. Yuuta had a break but realised his mistake, Yuuta said, "*Shikkari shiro*!" (Brace yourself). Then he began to raise his box until he met with Natsuko again despite having cried and having experienced pain in his hands . We can understand that Yuuta also wants to work hard even though he often jokes.

8. Friendly and Communicating

(Kwon, Vallotton, Kiegelmann, & Wilhelm, 2018), stated that communication is not limited to spoken language, particularly in early childhood. In general, children in Japan rarely communicate with strangers they don't know. However, by carrying out their first assignment, they become forced to connect with others, especially when they need others to help them. For example, a child with a small body could not see merchandise well in a store, and then she took the initiative to ask the store clerk, "*Sumimasen directly! Piiman to negi to daikon, arimasenka?* "(Excuse me. Is there a bell pepper, spring onion, and turnips?). Whereas children the same age as her may rarely dare to talk to strangers . The first errand activity shows character education to improve communication skills (Pozdeeva, 2015). Asking for help is a form of communication with others.

9. Tolerance

Tolerance is a social attitude of openness, even to opinions, characteristics, and behaviour that one dislikes (Berggren & Nilsson, 2016). One example of tolerance is shown by a child who tolerates her sister, who does not want to walk because of drowsiness that is already unbearable because, at that hour, it was her sister's bedtime. The elder sister understood and

then tried to carry her sister. She understood and could tolerate her sister despite her burdens. She knew her sister's habit of taking a nap, so she thought her sister's sleepiness was natural.

10. Care for the environment

The character of care for the environment could be seen in the Hajimete no Otsukai Episode: Umi U-tan (Obentou) minutes 06:46. While waiting for the train, Umi saw a butterfly flying over the railroad tracks. Umi showed concern for the animals by trying to talk to the butterfly. Umi says, "Choochoo, hikareru, yo!" (Watch out the butterfly will get hit, you know!).

Conclusion

Through the *Hajimete no Otsukai* program, we can find out what kind of character traits may be found in early childhood in Japan. These characteristics are: caring, independence, discipline, creativity, cooperation, responsibility, hard work, friendship and communication, tolerance, care for the environment. According to observations on the data, most of the children observed unconsciously bring out their respective characters because they do the same thing that is done by their parents, especially their mother. The author thinks that giving examples and experiences to children is more effective in educating their characters, and also Japanese children's ability to memorise behaviour proves   the effectiveness of "education mom" (*Kyooiku mama*) in Japan (Knipprath, 2004).

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