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## Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Values in Early Childhood Moral and Religious Development

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### Abstract

This research aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic religious education values in the moral and religious development of early childhood. The method used in this research is a qualitative approach, with data collection through observation, interviews and document analysis in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang. The research results show that the application of Islamic religious education values, such as through example, habituation, honesty, responsibility and compassion, significantly contributes to the formation of children's character and morals. Interactive learning methods, including games, stories and group activities, facilitate children's understanding of these values. Apart from that, support from parents and the surrounding environment has proven to be very important in strengthening the implementation of the values of Islamic Religious Education. This research concludes that Islamic religious education at an early age plays an important role in building children's morals and social responsibility, and recommends the need to increase cooperation between educators, parents and the community in supporting children's moral and religious development.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Religious Education, Moral Development, Early Childhood Education*



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### INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly rapid technological development, children from an early age are very easily exposed to various information, including that which is not in accordance with moral and religious values (Suwardana, 2018). Early childhood is an important period in moral and religious development because at this stage children begin to absorb various values and norms from the surrounding environment which will shape their character in the future (Sari, 2023). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping children's moral and religious character from an early age, with the aim of instilling Islamic values which can be the basis for children's moral development (Jaenullah, Ferdian Utama, 2022).

Moral education for early childhood is considered important because early childhood is an important period in personality formation (Fatimatul Zuhroh, 2022).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) includes instilling basic values such as honesty, compassion, responsibility and respect for others, all of which are the main foundation for children's moral development (Ariza, Bukittinggi, & Tamrin, 2021). These values are not just theoretical knowledge, but should be realized in real action through habituation and daily interactions in the child's environment.

Moral and religious education in early childhood can be understood through Piaget's theory of cognitive development which states that early childhood is in the preoperational stage, where they learn through concrete experience and direct observation (Arini, Mudjito, & Hariyati, 2021). Therefore, religious learning approaches for early childhood must be designed with activities that are interesting and easy to understand, such as stories, games and daily practices. According to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, moral values develop as children age and experience (Mathes, 2019). In the early stages, children tend to judge an action based on external consequences, such as rewards or punishments. The application of religious values in everyday life can help them understand the deeper meaning of morals and religion, so that these values are firmly ingrained in children (Faizah, Hamzah, Farantika, Utama, & Anggia, 2024).

Experts also emphasize the importance of religious education from an early age (Oktarina & Latipah, 2021). According to Al-Ghazali, early childhood education emphasizes the formation of morals, because good morals are an important foundation for carrying out religious teachings (Azhari & Mustapa, 2021). Children who are accustomed to noble morals will be better prepared to understand and carry out the teachings of the Islamic religion. Meanwhile, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan believes that religious education for children must be carried out with love and understanding. Ulwan underlined that in the religious education process, the methods used must be adapted to children's development so that they are easily understood and accepted (Ferdian Utama, 2017).

Parents and teachers have a role as the main models in the educational process. Children at an early age tend to imitate the behavior they see, so they learn and understand moral values through the examples given by the adults around them (Azarine & Hendriani, 2023). For example, a teacher who consistently behaves honestly and fairly, or parents who show love and respect for others, can have a big impact on the formation of children's morals (Lundeto, 2021). It is hoped that Islamic religious education can be the main tool in helping children understand the importance of these values as part of their religious teachings.

However, one of the big challenges in implementing moral education for early childhood is ensuring that the learning process takes place effectively and interestingly. For example, the learning carried out in Kindergarten A is only based on rote memorization, which tends to make children remember values without understanding their essence. Therefore, the methods used must be innovative and adapted to the characteristics of an early age, where it is easier for them to learn through direct experience, games and stories that contain moral messages. For example, telling stories about Islamic figures who have good qualities, games that train cooperation, or activities that show the importance of sharing (Fawzi & Dodi, 2022). With this approach, children not only memorize values, but can also understand their meaning and learn to practice them independently in everyday life.

Habits in daily activities are also important, such as getting children used to thanking, apologizing, or helping friends. This can strengthen children's understanding that the values they learn in the school or home environment are part of their everyday lives. When religious education is delivered in a fun and relevant way for children, they will be better prepared to internalize these moral values and use them as a basis for building positive relationships with other people, so that moral education integrated through PAI can have a long-term impact in their character development (Rahman, Ruswandi, & Erihadiana, 2021).

Several previous studies have shown the importance of religious education in shaping children's morals and character from an early age. As research by (Suryana, 2020) found that the application of Islamic religious values in learning at PAUD can improve children's moral understanding and practice in everyday life. Research by (Amalia, 2019) states that getting used to simple religious activities, such as praying and being honest, helps children internalize religious values better. Furthermore, research by (Zainuddin, 2018) revealed that Islamic story-based learning methods play an important role in increasing the moral awareness of young children, because this method is able to attract interest and help children better understand the meaning behind religious values. Other research from (Utami, 2021) states that habituation approaches such as congregational prayers and reading prayers before starting activities can instill religious values more deeply in PAUD children.

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this research is how to implement the values of Islamic Religious Education in the moral and religious development of early childhood. The aim of this research is to identify and analyze the implementation of Islamic Religious Education values in the moral and religious development of early childhood. It is hoped that this research can provide a deeper understanding of the importance of religious education in children's moral development and provide recommendations to educators and parents in implementing Islamic religious values in children from an early age.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe and analyze the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in the moral and religious development of early childhood in Kindergarten Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the application of Islamic religious values and see their impact on the formation of character and morals in early childhood. The subjects of this research were early childhood children in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang, together with the teachers and principal of Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang who have an important role in implementing Islamic religious education in the school environment. Subject selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, where subjects were selected based on direct involvement in the PAI learning process. This research was carried out at Kindergarten A located at Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang, which has an intensive and structured PAI program to support the moral and religious development of early childhood.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out directly to observe the daily activities of children in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten,

Tulangbawang, especially in carrying out habituation activities such as group prayer, sharing, giving thanks, and disciplined attitudes that reflect PAI values. Apart from that, observations include observing interactions between teachers and children as well as how teachers apply PAI values in teaching and learning activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, principals, and parents to obtain more detailed information regarding the implementation of PAI values in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang, which includes the methods used by teachers, challenges faced, and the expected results from implementing PAI values. Documentation includes daily activity notes, PAI curriculum guidebooks in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang, as well as photos and videos documenting children's activities during religious learning activities (Arias, Arias, & Rodríguez-Medina, 2021).

The data obtained was analyzed descriptively qualitatively through several steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by simplifying the data obtained and grouping information based on main themes, such as learning methods, habituation activities, and challenges faced. The data presentation is arranged in the form of a narrative description to facilitate understanding regarding the implementation of PAI values in Telaga Sunnah Kindergarten, Tulangbawang. The final step is drawing conclusions by interpreting the results of observations, interviews and documentation to answer the problem formulation and research objectives. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques, namely combining the results of observation, interviews and documentation so that the results are more valid. The member check technique was also applied by reconfirming the interview results with respondents to ensure the accuracy of the data collected (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **The Role of Teachers as Models in Instilling Islamic Values**

The role of teachers as models in instilling religious values in early childhood education is very much needed. The role of teachers as models in instilling religious values in early childhood education is very much needed because teachers function as role models who will be imitated by children. In their developmental stages, children tend to imitate the behavior of adults around them, especially authority figures such as teachers. Therefore, teachers must demonstrate attitudes and behavior that reflect the religious values they wish to instill, such as honesty, compassion and respect for others (Nurunniyah, 2023).

By integrating Islamic religious values into daily activities, such as joint prayer, sharing and mutual respect, teachers can create a learning environment that supports children's character development. When teachers consistently apply these values in their interactions with students, children will learn to internalize and apply these values in everyday life. In addition, teachers use various creative methods, such as storytelling, role playing, and group activities, to convey religious values in a way that is interesting and relevant to children (Wahyuni, 2019). Thus, the role of teachers as models not only helps in teaching religious values, but also in shaping children's personalities and morals which are very important for their future development.

As authority figures and role models, teachers have a big responsibility in teaching religious values to young children. Research in Kindergarten A shows that

teachers not only teach religious values theoretically, but also demonstrate behavior that is in accordance with these values in everyday life. For example, a teacher at Kindergarten A stated:

*"We not only teach children about honesty and compassion, but also ensure that we ourselves are always honest and fair in our daily interactions."*

Teacher behavior that reflects religious values, such as honesty, compassion and mutual respect, becomes an example for students. One parent added:

*"I saw my child starting to imitate his teacher's polite behavior. He said thank you more often and apologized."*

By creating daily habits, such as starting activities with prayer together or reminding children to share and apologize, teachers help instill these values consistently in their routines.

Teachers also use creative methods in delivering material, such as Islamic stories, games and interactive activities. One teacher explained:

*"We often use dolls to tell stories of the Prophet that teach moral values. The children are very enthusiastic and easily understand the messages conveyed."*

This is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory which emphasizes the importance of imitation in children's learning process. The social learning theory put forward by Albert Bandura emphasizes that many behaviors, attitudes and values are learned by children through a process of observation and imitation (Lesilolo, 2019). In the context of education, especially in early childhood, this theory explains that children learn not only through direct instruction, but also by observing the people around them, such as parents, teachers and friends. Bandura argued that children tend to imitate the behavior of models they perceive as positive. In instilling religious values, when teachers demonstrate good behavior such as honesty, compassion and mutual respect, children are more likely to imitate this behavior. This imitation process is also strengthened by positive reinforcement, when children see that the behavior they imitate, such as sharing or saying thank you, gets a positive response from the environment, they tend to continue doing it. Additionally, children learn from the experiences of others by observing how they interact. For example, when children see their teachers praying before activities, they learn to appreciate the practice as an important part of everyday life. Through the process of imitation and observation, children not only imitate actions, but also begin to form their own identities and attitudes.

The Islamic religious values taught by teachers become part of their character, guiding their behavior and interactions with others. Emotional involvement also plays an important role; when teachers show empathy and compassion, children feel more connected and motivated to learn the values taught. Thus, Bandura's social learning theory provides a strong framework for understanding how religious values can be instilled through exemplary teacher behavior, so that children not only learn theoretically, but also internalize and apply them in everyday life.

The emotional connection built between teachers and students, through empathy and compassion, also plays an important role in increasing children's self-confidence. One parent stated:

*"I noticed my child was more open to discussing religious values after interacting with a loving teacher."*

In addition, teachers can facilitate group discussions to help children understand the deeper meaning of these values and apply them in real situations.

Consistency in the application of religious values is very important, because children need assurance that the values taught apply in various contexts. With the right actions, behavior and approach, teachers can have a deep and positive influence on the formation of religious values among children. The research results show that teachers at Kindergarten A play a major role in forming children's morals. They set a consistent example of being fair, patient and compassionate. Parents also note that their children tend to be more compliant and understand basic concepts such as helping friends and being polite. This confirms that the role of teachers as models in instilling religious values is very much needed to support the character development of early childhood.

This finding is in line with the opinion of Al-Ghazali, an Islamic scholar and thinker, who emphasized the importance of the role of teachers as the main model in children's moral education. According to Al-Ghazali, moral education is not only about teaching moral values theoretically, but also involves real examples of behavior modeled by teachers. Teachers are considered the closest and most influential figures in children's lives, so their behavior and attitudes will be very influential in shaping students' character and morals. Al-Ghazali emphasized that good morals can be instilled through observing and imitating the behavior of adults, especially teachers. When teachers demonstrate good attitudes, such as honesty, compassion, and patience, children tend to emulate these attitudes in their daily interactions. Teachers who are consistent in implementing moral values and behaving in accordance with religious teachings will create an environment that supports the formation of children's character (Jamiatul, Maghfiroh, & Astuti, 2020). Thus, moral education is not only an academic responsibility, but also the moral responsibility of teachers as role models.

Al-Ghazali's opinion reflects the importance of integration between theory and practice in education, where teachers play an active role in demonstrating and instilling positive values in children's lives. In the context of religious education, the role of teachers as models becomes increasingly necessary, because they not only teach religious teachings, but must also be real examples of the values being taught, so that children can internalize and apply them in everyday life. The model of behavior shown by teachers in Kindergarten A influences children positively and accelerates the instillation of moral values. By modeling good behavior, children more easily understand abstract moral concepts through concrete actions, in accordance with the preoperational stage in Piaget's theory. In the preoperational stage, which takes place between the ages of 2 and 7 years, children begin to develop symbolic thinking abilities, but they still have difficulty understanding more complex and abstract concepts, including morality (Zajda, 2019).

At this stage children learn more effectively through observation and imitation. When teachers or other adults demonstrate good behavior, such as sharing, being polite, and showing empathy, children can see direct examples of these behaviors in concrete situations. This helps them to connect the moral values taught with the real actions they observe, making it easier to understand.

Thus, through observation and imitation of adult behavior, children in the preoperational stage can gain a better understanding of morality, even though they are still at a stage of development where abstract thinking is not yet fully mature. This

approach supports Piaget's theory that concrete experiences are very important in a child's learning process, especially in the development of moral understanding.

### **Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Values for Children's Moral Development**

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in Kindergarten A is carried out through an approach that integrates daily learning activities with activities aimed at instilling religious values in early childhood. Kindergarten A applies basic values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion and respect for others through various activities designed so that children not only know these values, but also practice them in their lives.

One of the main ways of implementation is through habituation activities. For example, daily activities begin with prayer together, training children to say polite words, thanking and apologizing, and inviting them to share with friends. This activity is repeated consistently so that children get used to behavior that reflects Islamic values. As stated by the Principal of Kindergarten A:

*"We instill religious values through routine activities, such as praying together before and after activities, saying greetings, and teaching children to share and help each other."*

The teachers also act as models in implementing PAI in Kindergarten A. They provide examples through daily actions and attitudes that reflect religious values. For example, teachers model honesty, fairness and compassion when interacting with children. One teacher added:

*"We use the method of habituation and example. Every morning we start with prayer together and train the children to speak politely."*

In addition, teachers use Islamic stories told in simple language and in interesting ways, such as using dolls or pictures, to help children understand the concept of religious values. The implementation of PAI values in Kindergarten A is also supported by special activities, such as educational games and group activities that teach cooperation, tolerance and mutual assistance. These programs are designed so that children not only memorize religious values but truly understand their meaning and integrate these values in daily actions.

One parent said:

*"My child is more accustomed to saying hello, thank you and apologizing after attending PAI at Kindergarten A."*

Based on the results of observations and interviews, PAI values are implemented through various habituation and direct practice activities which are carried out regularly at Kindergarten A. These activities include prayer before and after activities, getting used to saying hello, saying thank you, apologizing, and sharing with friends. Teachers at Kindergarten A also actively provide examples of good behavior, such as speaking politely and showing mutual respect, so that children can imitate this behavior. The methods used include stories about the Prophet and Islamic figures who behaved well, practical activities such as ablution and prayer, as well as Islamic songs that are easy for children to remember.

The research results above are in line with the theory of moral development put forward by Lawrence Kohlberg, he explains that morality develops through a series of stages, starting from understanding the direct consequences of actions (Fauzi &

Hasanah, 2024). In Kindergarten A, habituation activities such as group prayer, greetings, and sharing reflect the implementation of the early stages in children's moral development, where they are taught to understand morality through direct action and social consequences. Then, Albert Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that children learn through observation and imitation. In Kindergarten A, the teacher acts as a model of good behavior by demonstrating an honest and fair attitude in daily interactions, and using interesting Islamic stories as a medium to strengthen the imitation of good behavior. The constructivist learning theory developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky also emphasizes the importance of direct experience in the learning process. In Kindergarten A, hands-on practical activities such as ablution, prayer, and educational games provide real experiences for children to understand and apply religious values, so that they not only memorize information, but also build a deeper understanding. Apart from that, the implementation of PAI values in Kindergarten A is in line with the principles of moral education which emphasizes the delivery of religious education in an interesting and relevant manner. The habituation method applied has proven to be effective in instilling basic values, creating an environment that supports children's learning and moral growth. Thus, the implementation of PAI values in Kindergarten A does not only focus on religious knowledge, but also on the formation of children's character and morals through repeated activities, teacher examples, and direct experience, all of which contribute to children's moral and social development in the future. front.

The implementation of PAI values in Kindergarten A is in accordance with the principles of early childhood moral education, where religious education is delivered in a way that is interesting and relevant to children's development. The habituation method has proven effective for instilling basic values, in accordance with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, where young children understand morals based on the direct consequences of their actions. In addition, the teacher's exemplary approach strengthens Bandura's social learning theory which emphasizes the importance of imitation in the learning process of early childhood.

### **Challenges in Implementing PAI Values in Early Childhood**

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in Kindergarten A faces several challenges, such as limited time for learning activities, differences in children's family backgrounds which influence the consistency of value instillation, as well as children's limited understanding of more abstract values. The results of interviews with school principals and teachers show that limited time often prevents the delivery of PAI material in depth. The principal stated:

*"We often experience limited time in delivering PAI material, so sometimes the values we want to teach cannot be conveyed in depth."*

One teacher added:

*"Some children come from different family backgrounds. Some are not used to religious teachings, so they have difficulty understanding the values taught."*

The results of interviews with the principal and teachers at Kindergarten A revealed that limited time was one of the main obstacles in delivering Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material. School principals stated that time constraints often prevent them from teaching religious values in depth, so that there are times when the values they want to instill in children cannot be explained comprehensively. This situation

suggests that PAI teaching requires more than just conveying information; Children need time to discuss, interact and reflect on these values so they can internalize them well.

Apart from that, the teacher added that variations in children's family backgrounds also influence their understanding of religious teachings. Some children come from families that are not familiar with religious practices or values, so they have difficulty understanding the material taught at school. This represents an additional challenge for teachers, who must adapt their teaching methods to be more inclusive and able to reach all children, regardless of their background.

These two statements show that time constraints and differences in family backgrounds can create gaps in PAI values education, requiring educators to look for effective ways to convey these values so that they can be accepted and understood by all students. More creative and adaptive approaches, such as play-based teaching or the use of relevant stories, can help overcome these challenges and provide more meaningful learning experiences for children.

Analysis of this challenge was carried out through constructivism theory which emphasizes the importance of direct experience and social interaction in the learning process, as well as Piaget's theory of cognitive development which explains that children at an early age are in the preoperational stage, where they have difficulty understanding abstract concepts. Time limitations hinder children's opportunities to actively participate in a deeper learning process, while different family backgrounds make understanding religious values more difficult. Therefore, to overcome these challenges, it is important for teachers to apply a more interactive and contextual approach in teaching PAI values, such as using game-based learning methods, teaching through simpler stories, and involving parents in the child's learning process to creating consistency of values between school and home. In this way, children can more easily understand and internalize the religious values taught.

This challenge shows that the application of religious values requires adjustments in the methods used, so that they can be accepted by children who are still in the early stages of development. These findings support previous research by (Utami, 2021) which emphasizes the importance of using creative and interesting methods such as games or visual activities so that young children can more easily understand religious values. This research also shows the need for support from parents at home so that the values taught at school can be consistently reinforced.

Even though there are several challenges, the implementation of PAI values in Kindergarten A has succeeded in instilling moral and religious foundations in early childhood through habituation approaches, role models and creative methods that are adapted to the child's development stage. Teachers have an important role in providing examples of positive behavior, while support from parents at home also strengthens the formation of children's character. Even though there are challenges in implementation, the results of this research show that religious education at an early age has a positive impact on children's moral development, thus supporting the importance of Islamic religious education in forming the character of the young generation who is moral and has good character.

Based on the results and discussion above, the novelty of the research lies in the emphasis that teachers not only function as instructors, but also as role models that can be imitated by children. By showing behavior that reflects religious values, such

as honesty, love, and respect, teachers create a learning environment that supports the development of children's character. This research also highlights the use of creative methods, such as storytelling and role playing, to convey religious values in an interesting and relevant way, thus strengthening the internalization of those values in the children's daily lives. In addition, the research results show the importance of consistency in the application of religious values by teachers which not only strengthens children's knowledge of those values, but also helps shape their identity and moral attitude. This approach is in line with Albert Bandura's social learning theory which emphasizes the role of observation and imitation in learning, as well as Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development which describes how children's morality develops through concrete experiences. Thus, this research provides a significant contribution to the understanding of how the teacher's role as a model can strengthen the cultivation of Islamic religious values in early childhood education for children's moral development, as well as the challenges faced in the process.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the implementation of Islamic religious education values has a significant influence on the moral and religious development of early childhood. These values are not only taught in theory, but are also applied in daily practice through various interactive methods that involve children. Implementing values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and tolerance helps shape children's character and strengthen their moral foundations. Using fun approaches, such as games, stories and group activities, makes it easier for children to understand and internalize religious values. The research results show that children who are actively involved in the values of Islamic religious education show an increase in positive attitudes, good social relationships, and the ability to empathize with others.

Apart from that, the role of parents and the surrounding environment is very important in supporting the implementation of these values. Collaboration between educators, parents and the community can create an environment conducive to children's moral and religious development. Therefore, this research emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation between parties in children's religious education, as well as developing training programs for teachers so that they can be more effective in implementing religious values in learning. Overall, this research recommends increasing attention to Islamic religious education in the context of early childhood education, as a strategic effort to form a generation with noble and responsible morals in society.

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