

Daily Habit Strategies for Internalizing Islamic Moral Values in Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of daily habituation strategies in internalizing Islamic moral values among early childhood learners at PAUD KB Sehat Mpili. It emphasizes the importance of strengthening character education through consistent and structured practices from an early age. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving the principal and teachers. The findings show that activities such as greeting practices, routine prayers, time discipline, responsibility-based tasks, and guided social interactions contribute to the development of moral behaviors, including politeness, empathy, responsibility, and adherence to routines. These processes are supported by teacher role modeling and positive reinforcement, enabling gradual value internalization through repeated experiences. Internalization is understood as a continuous process in which children adopt values in daily learning contexts. The study reveals that habituation does not directly determine outcomes but plays a significant role in shaping children's moral behavior patterns. Its novelty lies in viewing habituation as part of an integrated pedagogical system that connects daily practices, teacher modeling, and value reinforcement, contributing to early childhood character education.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education constitutes a fundamental stage in shaping human character and personality. However, the main research problem addressed in this study is how early childhood education can systematically design and implement daily habituation strategies to effectively internalize Islamic moral values, rather than merely producing temporary behavioral compliance. At this phase, children experience what is widely recognized as the golden age, a period marked by rapid cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual development (aini Umayyah & Aziz, 2023). Developmental theory proposed by Jean Piaget explains that early childhood falls within the preoperational stage, where symbolic thinking, language acquisition, imitation, and habitual repetition significantly influence learning processes. Meanwhile, Lev Vygotsky emphasizes the crucial role of social interaction and environmental habituation in constructing children's cognitive structures and behavioral patterns. These theoretical perspectives affirm that consistent and meaningful experiences during early childhood are internalized and gradually form stable behavioral dispositions (Hakim, 2022). Thus, this theoretical explanation is presented in a concise manner to support the argument that structured and repetitive experiences are essential for long-term character formation.

Within the framework of Islamic education, moral formation (*akhlaq*) represents the central objective of the educational process. Akhlaq is not merely understood as a set of external behavioral

norms but as deeply rooted character traits embedded within the individual's personality (Shidiq & Maslamah, 2023). The educational thought of Al-Ghazali highlights that moral character is cultivated through continuous training (*riyadhah*) and habituation until virtuous conduct becomes an inherent disposition of the soul. This perspective positions daily habituation as a primary pedagogical strategy for internalizing Islamic moral values. Moral education for early childhood therefore requires concrete, repetitive, and experiential practices integrated into children's daily routines (Muhammad et al., 2022). In this study, the theoretical discussion is intentionally streamlined to emphasize its practical implication, namely the necessity of consistent habituation practices in real educational settings.

Contemporary social realities indicate increasing challenges in nurturing children's moral character. The rapid advancement of digital technology, shifting parenting patterns, and exposure to diverse global value systems create a complex environment for children's moral development. Young children today grow within media-saturated contexts characterized by instant information and visual stimulation ('Aziz, 2023). Without structured guidance, these influences may weaken direct social interaction and positive behavioral reinforcement. Such conditions highlight the urgency for early childhood institutions to design systematic strategies that effectively internalize Islamic moral values in everyday educational practices (Haidir et al., 2022). This situation strengthens the practical relevance of the research problem, particularly in identifying applicable and sustainable strategies within real classroom contexts.

Daily habituation strategies are particularly relevant in early childhood settings because young learners acquire behavior primarily through imitation, repetition, and experiential engagement. Routine activities such as greeting others politely, reciting prayers before and after activities, sharing with peers, maintaining cleanliness, and demonstrating respect toward teachers represent tangible forms of moral internalization. When practiced consistently, these routines gradually transform external instructions into internalized moral awareness (Nuraeni et al., 2022). Therefore, habituation serves not only as a behavioral training mechanism but also as a transformative process that bridges external norms and internal moral consciousness. Previous empirical studies on character education in early childhood institutions demonstrate that consistent value-based routines significantly contribute to the development of discipline, empathy, responsibility, and religiosity among children. However, an important empirical and practical gap remains, as many studies do not explain how these habituation practices are systematically structured, managed, and integrated into daily learning processes (Haidir et al., 2022).

Furthermore, limited research explores the mechanisms through which daily routines function as structured processes of moral internalization. This gap underscores the need for in-depth investigation into how habituation strategies are conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated within specific institutional contexts (Habibah & Ubaidillah, 2022). In addition, previous studies tend to emphasize outcomes rather than processes, resulting in limited understanding of how values are gradually internalized through repeated and structured educational practices. Previous research has not examined how daily habituation strategies are systematically designed as an integrated pedagogical framework that connects planning, implementation, and evaluation processes in internalizing Islamic moral values in early childhood education. This indicates a clear empirical and practical gap, particularly in understanding procedural aspects and sustainability of habituation as a continuous system rather than incidental practice.

PAUD KB Sehat Mpili, as an Islamic-oriented early childhood education institution, presents a distinctive model in implementing moral education. The institution does not focus solely on cognitive development but prioritizes the cultivation of Islamic moral character as an integral component of its daily learning activities. Habituation strategies are embedded within structured daily schedules, forming a consistent educational culture rather than isolated instructional moments. Such practices reflect a deliberate effort to institutionalize moral values as part of the school's identity and routine (Safi'i et al., 2023). This institutional context provides a relevant setting for examining how habituation strategies are operationalized in real educational environments (Fahmiyah et al., 2025). This setting specifically addresses the practical gap by allowing observation of how habituation is actually implemented, not merely conceptualized. (Damayanti et al., 2025).

Additionally, each educational institution operates within a unique socio-cultural context,

influenced by community values, parental involvement, and institutional management. These contextual variations necessitate localized research that captures the specific dynamics of moral internalization through daily habituation (Anam & Sobarna, 2025). In terms of the state of the art, prior research has emphasized the importance of habituation, modeling, and environmental influence in shaping children's moral development. However, these studies have largely approached these elements in a fragmented manner, without integrating them into a cohesive framework of daily educational practice. Therefore, this study focuses on bridging this practical gap by examining how these elements operate as an integrated and continuous system within a specific institutional context.

One commonly applied approach in early childhood settings is the use of routine-based learning activities. However, existing literature often discusses this approach in general terms, leading to conceptual repetition without deeper empirical elaboration. This study seeks to move beyond such repetition by examining how structured daily practices supported by teacher modeling and reinforcement function within a real educational environment. By focusing on PAUD KB Sehat Mpili, this research highlights how these practices are organized, implemented, and experienced by teachers and children. Furthermore, this study positions the process of value internalization not merely as a theoretical construct but as an observable and gradual process reflected in children's daily behavior. The focus is therefore shifted from abstract discussions of character education to concrete indicators of moral development within classroom routines. This approach allows for a clearer connection between educational strategies and behavioral outcomes. Thus, this study emphasizes empirical and practical contributions by offering a structured and implementable model of daily habituation for internalizing Islamic moral values.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the process of internalizing Islamic moral values through daily learning practices in an early childhood education setting. The research was conducted at PAUD KB Sehat Mpili, involving one principal and four teachers as the main participants. These participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in designing and implementing daily learning activities. The data generated in this study are in-depth and context-specific, focusing on both observable classroom practices and participants' reflective explanations. Data were collected through three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted during daily learning activities over a sustained period, focusing on how routines such as greeting practices, collective prayers, time discipline, task responsibility, and social interactions were implemented in the classroom.

The observation also captured teacher behaviors, including modeling, instructions, and reinforcement strategies, as well as children's responses reflected in their daily actions. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers to explore their understanding of Islamic moral values, the objectives of daily routines, the strategies used in guiding children's behavior, and the challenges encountered during implementation. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted in a semi-structured format to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives. In addition, relevant documents such as daily lesson plans, school activity schedules, and institutional guidelines were analyzed to complement observational and interview data. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure. First, all data were transcribed and organized systematically. Initial coding was conducted by identifying meaningful units related to daily practices, value formation, and teacher strategies. These codes were then grouped into broader categories, such as routine activities, modeling practices, and reinforcement mechanisms. Finally, these categories were synthesized into overarching themes that explain the process of value internalization in the studied context. To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation techniques by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documents. Triangulation was also conducted across participants to confirm the consistency of information provided by different sources.

Furthermore, member checking was carried out by confirming key findings with participants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations. The researcher's position in this study was as a non-participant observer who engaged directly in the field while maintaining reflective awareness of potential biases. The researcher continuously reflected on personal assumptions and interpretations throughout the data

collection and analysis process to maintain analytical rigor. The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement and data triangulation. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was ensured through a clear and transparent research process, while confirmability was maintained by grounding all findings in empirical data and maintaining an audit trail of the research process.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The findings of this study are clearly organized into three interconnected thematic categories: (1) structured daily practices as a medium of value exposure, (2) teacher modeling and reinforcement as a mechanism of value transmission, and (3) gradual behavioral change as an indicator of value internalization. The first theme highlights how structured daily practices function as the initial stage of value exposure. Based on classroom observations, activities such as greeting routines, collective prayers, and task-based responsibilities were consistently implemented in patterned and repetitive ways. These practices were not merely routine actions but served as systematic efforts to introduce and familiarize children with Islamic moral values. A teacher explained, *"We repeat the same routines every day so that the children become used to them, like saying greetings when entering the class or praying before activities."* Analytically, this indicates that habituation acts as the entry point of the internalization process, where repeated exposure enables children to recognize, imitate, and begin to understand expected behaviors.

However, the findings show that habituation alone is insufficient to ensure value internalization. This leads to the second theme, which emphasizes teacher modeling and reinforcement as key mechanisms of value transmission. Teachers consistently demonstrated desired behaviors and provided immediate feedback to children's actions. For instance, when a child helped a peer, the teacher responded, *"That is a good example of helping a friend, thank you for being kind."* Such reinforcement not only strengthens behavior but also assigns moral meaning to the action. From an analytical perspective, this theme reveals that social interaction transforms habituation into meaningful learning, as children interpret and internalize values through guided experiences. In this stage, habituation is connected with interpretation, where teacher support bridges external actions and internal understanding.

The third theme shows that value internalization is reflected in gradual behavioral change rather than instant results. Observations indicate that children began to demonstrate consistent behaviors such as initiating greetings independently, completing tasks without prompts, and showing empathy toward peers. One teacher noted, *"At the beginning, they needed to be reminded, but now some of them say greetings first and help their friends without being asked."* This finding analytically demonstrates a clear progression from habituation to behavioral change, where repeated practice and reinforcement eventually lead to self-initiated and internally motivated actions.

Overall, these findings illustrate a connected and sequential process: habituation (structured daily practices) → value transmission (teacher modeling and reinforcement) → behavioral change (internalization outcomes). This relationship confirms that value internalization is not an automatic result of repetition but a gradual and dynamic process shaped by continuous interaction, guidance, and reinforcement. Thus, the study emphasizes that effective moral education in early childhood requires an integrated pedagogical approach in which daily routines, teacher involvement, and reflective reinforcement work together to produce meaningful and sustainable behavioral transformation.

DISCUSSION

Daily Habituation Strategy as a Structured Pedagogical Design

The findings of this study suggest that the internalization of Islamic moral values in early childhood education is not an automatic outcome of repeated exposure, but rather a gradual and socially mediated process. This indicates that internalization operates through a layered mechanism, where exposure, interaction, and reinforcement interact dynamically to shape children's moral awareness.

Instead of viewing daily routines as inherently effective, this study indicates that their influence depends on how they are interpreted, reinforced, and contextualized within classroom interactions. In this sense, the process of internalization can be better understood through a socio-constructivist perspective, where children actively construct meaning from guided experiences rather than passively receiving values (Saputri & Putra, 2022). Reflectively, this suggests that routines only become meaningful when supported by social interaction and guided interpretation.

From the perspective of developmental psychology, early childhood is situated in the preoperational stage as explained by Jean Piaget, in which learning processes are strongly influenced by concrete experiences and repetition. The daily habituation strategy implemented through greetings, prayers, time discipline, and social interaction reflects the application of learning principles based on repetition and direct experience (Saudah, 2023). Furthermore, the consistently practiced habituation aligns with the social constructivist theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky. The interaction between teachers and children in every routine activity demonstrates that the social environment functions as a space for constructing meaning and behavior (Wakidi & Musnandar, 2022). This implies that the mechanism of internalization is dialogical in nature, emerging through continuous interaction within the learning environment.

Teachers do not merely deliver instructions; they act as mediators of values through dialogue, guidance, and concrete examples. In this context, habituation becomes a medium for value internalization through repeated and meaningful social interaction (Bachtiar & Salim, 2025). Field findings reveal that the integration of moral values across all stages of activities from opening, core learning, to closing sessions creates continuity in learning experiences (Zahroh, 2023). Reflectively, this continuity strengthens the relationship between action and meaning, allowing children to gradually internalize values rather than simply imitate behavior. Daily habituation strengthens the association between action and value, enabling children not only to understand what should be done but also to become accustomed to practicing it in various situations (Nabilah & Erihadiana, 2022).

Thus, the daily habituation strategy can be understood as a deliberate engineering of the learning environment designed to shape character (Sulyati & Rahman, 2025). The school environment functions as a value ecosystem that supports the gradual and continuous development of moral character. In comparison with previous studies, this research offers a more comprehensive perspective by positioning habituation not merely as repetitive activity but as a structured pedagogical system that integrates planning, implementation, and evaluation. Theoretically, this study contributes by emphasizing that value internalization is a systemic and process-oriented phenomenon, rather than an outcome of isolated practices. While prior research tends to focus on behavioral outcomes, this study highlights the processual and systemic nature of habituation within institutional practice.

Internalization of Islamic Moral Values through Role Modeling and Positive Reinforcement

The research findings show that the process of value internalization occurs through three main mechanisms: role modeling, repetition, and positive reinforcement. Teacher role modeling emerges as a central factor in this process (Haerudin et al., 2022). Teachers demonstrate religious behavior, politeness, and empathy in daily interactions, providing children with concrete models to imitate. From the perspective of Islamic education, the concept of role modeling holds a fundamental position, as emphasized by Al-Ghazali, who stated that moral character is formed through continuous training and habituation until it becomes an inherent trait (Zaldi & Satria, 2022). Reflectively, this shows that consistent examples from teachers play a crucial role in transforming external guidance into internal awareness.

Religious habituation practices such as collective prayer and simple worship activities create shared spiritual experiences. These experiences not only instill cognitive understanding of religious values but also cultivate the affective dimension through a sense of togetherness and order (Formen & Pranoto, 2025). This process illustrates that the internalization of religious values does not occur through lecturing, but through repeated direct experiences (Hidayat, 2025). The positive reinforcement provided by teachers, such as praise or simple appreciation, also plays a significant role in strengthening moral behavior (Qoumariah et al., 2025). This approach is consistent with social learning theory as

proposed by Albert Bandura (Muzakkir & Muhammad, 2024). Analytically, reinforcement functions to stabilize behavior by attaching positive value to repeated actions.

When children receive positive responses for actions aligned with moral values, those behaviors are more likely to be repeated and eventually become habits. Observations indicate that certain behaviors, such as offering greetings and helping peers, begin to occur spontaneously. This spontaneity signifies a shift from external compliance to internal awareness (Djuaini, 2025). This transition reflects the core mechanism of internalization, where externally guided behavior evolves into self-regulated action. The habituation of responsibility through activities such as organizing learning materials illustrates how moral values are connected to concrete actions. Children learn that every activity carries consequences and responsibilities, fostering independence and social awareness (Pratama et al., 2025).

Compared to previous studies, this research emphasizes the integration of role modeling, reinforcement, and habituation within a unified process of value internalization. The novelty lies in demonstrating how these elements operate simultaneously within daily routines, rather than as separate pedagogical strategies. Theoretically, this study contributes by conceptualizing internalization as an interconnected process involving behavioral practice, social interaction, and cognitive-emotional development. Conceptually, the findings can be interpreted as a transformation process in which external behavioral guidance gradually evolves into internal moral awareness.

Implications for Early Childhood Character Formation

The discussion of the research findings indicates that the daily habituation strategy has direct implications for early childhood character formation. Observable behavioral changes, such as increased independence, greater concern for peers, and heightened religious awareness, demonstrate that consistent habituation produces tangible effects in daily practice (Zahriyah, 2025). Character formation through habituation reflects a preventive and constructive approach to moral education. Children are not merely told about good values; they are actively involved in real practices that enable those values to become part of their personal identity. The school environment functions as a space for value socialization that supports children's social-emotional development (Komariah & Nihayah, 2023).

Another implication is the importance of consistency and collaboration between teachers and the institution in maintaining a culture of habituation. Without consistency, routines risk losing their pedagogical meaning. These findings reinforce the view that moral education in early childhood requires systematic design, institutional commitment, and the active involvement of educators as agents of value transmission (Muhajir, 2022). Reflectively, this also suggests that the effectiveness of habituation may vary depending on contextual and institutional conditions.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the daily habituation strategy at PAUD KB Sehat Mpili is aligned with developmental theories and Islamic educational principles, and demonstrates effectiveness in fostering Islamic moral character among young children (Huda et al., 2024). Value internalization occurs through a gradual process that integrates role modeling, direct experience, and continuous reinforcement within a structured learning environment.

The implications of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it strengthens the conceptual understanding of value internalization by demonstrating the integration of developmental psychology and Islamic educational philosophy within a structured habituation framework. More explicitly, this study contributes by offering a process-based perspective of internalization that connects habituation, modeling, and reinforcement as a unified system. Practically, it provides guidance for educators and institutions in designing sustainable and systematic habituation programs.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was conducted in a single early childhood education institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts with different socio-cultural backgrounds. The study primarily relies on qualitative observations and interpretations, which may be subject to researcher bias. In addition, the research focuses on short-term observations, so it does not fully capture the long-term sustainability of moral internalization. These limitations indicate the need for further studies with broader contexts and longitudinal approaches to deepen the understanding of value internalization mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the implementation of daily habituation strategies and their role in internalizing Islamic moral values among early childhood learners at PAUD KB Sehat Mpili. The findings reveal that daily habituation functions as a structured pedagogical design systematically integrated into all stages of learning through consistent routines, teacher modeling, and positive reinforcement. This approach effectively internalizes key Islamic moral values such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and politeness, as reflected in observable behavioral changes including increased independence, spontaneous polite communication, and stronger social awareness. The study emphasizes that moral internalization occurs through continuous, experience-based practices rather than solely through verbal instruction, highlighting the importance of designing learning environments as value-based ecosystems. Practically, the research offers an implementable framework for early childhood institutions to develop structured and sustainable habituation programs, while theoretically contributing to the integration of developmental psychology and Islamic educational perspectives in understanding moral character formation.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

MA contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing. SK contributed to data analysis, supervision, and manuscript review. WM contributed to data collection, validation, and editing of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or services were used in the design, data collection, analysis, or substantive writing of this manuscript. The research and writing process were conducted entirely by the authors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this research, including financial, institutional, or personal interests that could influence the results or interpretation of the study.

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