



Introducing Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education at the Beginning of Schooling

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the efforts to introduce and instill Islamic values in early childhood education during the initial period of school entry at KB Tunas Harapan, Jombang. This research employed a qualitative approach, focusing on observation and documentation as the primary data collection techniques. The findings indicate that the introduction and cultivation of Islamic values in early childhood education at KB Tunas Harapan are implemented through structured school activity management. The achievement of Islamic values education is focused on three main aspects: first, the introduction of aqidah (faith), such as teaching children to recite the two declarations of faith (shahada); second, the introduction of ibadah (worship), including familiarizing children with prayer movements through fasholatan activities; and third, the development of akhlaq (moral conduct) through habituation practices, such as greeting upon entering the classroom and showing respect by kissing the teacher's hand. This study was conducted at the beginning of the new academic year in the odd semester, with all participants being newly enrolled students who initially had limited understanding of Islamic values. Within a two-week period, early childhood learners at KB Tunas Harapan began to demonstrate positive behavioral changes, such as greeting when entering the classroom. However, some children had not yet fully applied these practices, not due to lack of ability, but rather because they were still shy and adapting to interactions with teachers and peers.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical and fundamental period in human growth and development. This stage represents the foundation of personality formation, which significantly influences a child's future life experiences (Graf et al., 2021; Heberle et al., 2020; Nelson & Gabard-Durnam, 2020). Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age, a period during which brain development occurs rapidly (Sutapa et al., 2021), enabling children to easily absorb new experiences and knowledge encountered in their environment.

The definition and age range of early childhood vary depending on different perspectives. According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System in Indonesia, early childhood refers to children aged 0–6 years. Meanwhile, Majorjy Ebbeck

defines early childhood as the age range from 0 to 8 years, emphasizing that this period is highly sensitive and effective for instilling positive values (Maenner et al., 2023). Similarly, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood as the period from birth to eight years old, encompassing educational programs such as child care centers, family child care homes, preschools, kindergartens, and early elementary education (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Prado et al., 2021; Shonkoff et al., 2021). Based on developmental stages, early childhood is commonly categorized into four groups: (1) infancy (0–12 months), (2) toddlerhood or playgroup age (1–3 years), (3) preschool age (4–6 years), and (4) early school age (7–8 years).

From an Islamic perspective, children are regarded as a trust (*amanah*) bestowed by Allah SWT upon their parents. Therefore, parents bear the responsibility to nurture, protect, and educate their children appropriately. Education plays a vital role in shaping children into individuals who are morally upright, knowledgeable, faithful, and devoted to Allah (Kawuryan et al., 2021; Suryaningsih & Aisyah, 2024; Widat & Wulandari, 2023). Children and education are inseparable elements, as education serves as a means to develop the innate potential granted by Allah. This concept is reflected in Surah An-Nahl (16:78), which states that Allah brings humans into the world without knowledge and grants them hearing, sight, and hearts so that they may learn and be grateful. This verse highlights the importance of education in cultivating the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual capacities given by Allah, and underscores the significance of early education in Islam.

Islam also emphasizes that every child is born in a state of fitrah (natural purity), as stated in a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “Every child is born upon fitrah, and it is their parents who make them Jewish, Christian, or Magian.” This hadith implies that parents play a central role in shaping a child’s religious and moral orientation (Muhammad et al., 2021; Muniroh & Nasution, 2021). In addition to parental guidance, selecting an educational institution that integrates Islamic values is crucial for supporting the child’s religious development during early childhood.

When children first enter formal educational institutions, particularly at the beginning of the academic year, many of them still have limited understanding of Islamic values. Although some children may already possess basic religious knowledge acquired from family education, a considerable number of parents have not optimally introduced Islamic teachings at home. Consequently, educational institutions play a strategic role in introducing and instilling Islamic values during the early stages of schooling. This study aims to examine the concept and implementation of Islamic-based early childhood education at KB Tunas Harapan. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how Islamic values are introduced and internalized in early childhood learning processes during the initial period of school entry.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted at KB Tunas Harapan, located in Jombang Village, Jombang District, Jember Regency. The research setting consisted of a single classroom with 12 students, comprising four boys and eight girls. All participants were newly enrolled students at the beginning of the academic year, making them suitable subjects for examining the introduction of Islamic values during the initial stage of schooling (Köhler, 2024).

This research employed a qualitative approach, which aimed to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically, including behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions within their natural context (Williams, 2021). Qualitative research is inherently naturalistic and is conducted directly in the field rather than in a laboratory setting, allowing researchers to capture authentic educational practices as they occur.

Data were collected through observation and documentation techniques. Observation was used to systematically examine and record activities related to the introduction and internalization of Islamic values in daily school practices. Documentation, including school records and learning activity materials, was utilized to support and strengthen the observational data and ensure the validity of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Faith (*Aqidah*)

The introduction of *aqidah* at KB Tunas Harapan is positioned as a foundational component of Islamic values education during the early school entry period. *Aqidah* is conceptualized as a core belief system that shapes children's understanding of Allah as the sole Creator and Sustainer of all existence. At the early childhood level, faith education is intentionally framed in ways that correspond with children's developmental characteristics, particularly their concrete and experiential modes of thinking. Rather than emphasizing abstract theological concepts, teachers focus on nurturing spiritual awareness through meaningful interactions with the child's immediate environment. Learning situations are deliberately designed to help children recognize divine presence through tangible and observable realities. This approach reflects an understanding that early childhood faith development is rooted more in experience and emotional attachment than in doctrinal mastery.

The learning process at KB Tunas Harapan emphasizes contextual and experiential methods that actively involve children in the construction of faith-related understanding. Teachers frequently connect natural phenomena—such as the sky, animals, plants, and everyday objects—to the concept of divine creation. Through guided questioning and interactive dialogue, children are encouraged to reflect on who created the world around them. This inquiry-based approach allows children to participate actively in meaning-making rather than passively receiving information. By repeatedly linking observable realities to Allah's creative power, children begin to internalize the concept of *tawhid* in a way that is relevant to their daily lives. This strategy helps bridge the gap between abstract belief and concrete experience, making faith education more accessible and personally meaningful for early learners.



Figure 1. Introduction to the Hijaiyah Letters

Qur'anic values, particularly those derived from Surah Luqman verse 13, provide the philosophical foundation for faith education practices at the institution. While the verse itself is not explicitly taught in its textual or exegetical form, its core message—affirming monotheism and rejecting polytheism—is consistently embedded within daily learning interactions. Teachers translate these theological principles into simple narratives and expressions suitable for early childhood comprehension. By avoiding complex terminology, educators ensure that children associate faith with positive emotions, security, and trust. This method supports the development of a healthy spiritual identity and prevents religious learning from becoming cognitively overwhelming. The emphasis is placed on cultivating belief through understanding and affection rather than fear or obligation.

Another significant strategy employed to strengthen *aqidah* is the gradual introduction of the two declarations of faith (*shahada*). Children are guided to recite the *shahada* regularly as part of their daily routines, accompanied by simplified explanations of its meaning. This practice allows children to become familiar with the central statement of Islamic belief in a non-pressured and supportive environment. Repetition and habituation play a crucial role in reinforcing understanding, as children naturally learn through routine and imitation. Over time, the *shahada* becomes not merely a memorized phrase but a meaningful expression that children recognize as part of their identity as Muslims. This approach aligns with early childhood learning principles that prioritize repetition, consistency, and emotional engagement.

Observational data collected during the study indicate that children begin to demonstrate early signs of faith awareness as a result of these instructional practices. For example, some children verbally identify Allah as the Creator during classroom discussions and outdoor learning activities without prompting from teachers. These spontaneous responses suggest that consistent exposure to faith-based dialogue positively influences children's spiritual cognition and awareness. The learning environment, supported by teacher modeling and daily routines, plays a critical role in reinforcing these values. Overall, the findings suggest that the introduction of *aqidah* at KB Tunas Harapan effectively supports the development of foundational faith awareness, laying the groundwork for deeper religious understanding in subsequent stages of education.

Worship (*Ibadah*)

The introduction of *ibadah* at KB Tunas Harapan is primarily aimed at familiarizing early childhood learners with basic worship practices as an integral part of their daily school routines. *Ibadah* is conceptualized not merely as a set of ritual acts, but as expressions of obedience, gratitude, and closeness to Allah that can be cultivated from an early age. In this context, worship education is intentionally designed to align with children's developmental characteristics, emphasizing enjoyment, imitation, and emotional engagement rather than obligation. Teachers avoid imposing formal religious responsibilities, recognizing that early childhood learners are still in the formative stage of understanding religious concepts. Instead, worship practices are introduced through habituation and positive modeling, allowing children to experience religious activities as meaningful, enjoyable, and emotionally comforting experiences within the school environment.



Figure 2. Fasholatan Activities

One of the central practices in introducing *ibadah* at KB Tunas Harapan is the implementation of *fasholatan* activities, where children collectively practice basic prayer movements under teacher supervision. These sessions are structured in a playful and supportive manner, encouraging children to imitate movements without fear of making mistakes. Teachers demonstrate prayer movements slowly and repeatedly, allowing children to follow at their own pace. This approach fosters a sense of safety and confidence, helping children associate prayer with positive feelings rather than pressure or obligation. Through regular participation in *fasholatan*, children gradually become familiar with the physical aspects of prayer, laying an important foundation for understanding formal worship practices in later stages of education.

The pedagogical approach to worship education is grounded in Qur'anic guidance, particularly Surah Luqman verse 17, which emphasizes the importance of establishing prayer and encouraging righteous behavior from an early age. Although early childhood learners are not expected to fully comprehend the religious obligations associated with prayer, early exposure plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes toward worship. Teachers consistently emphasize routine and repetition, reinforcing worship practices through daily schedules and structured activities. Positive reinforcement, such as verbal praise and encouragement, is used to strengthen children's emotional attachment to religious practices. This method helps cultivate intrinsic motivation, allowing children to engage in worship willingly rather than out of compulsion.

In addition to prayer practices, children are introduced to various forms of religious literacy, including daily supplications, short Qur'anic chapters, and hijaiyah letters. These elements are integrated into classroom routines, such as opening and closing activities, transitions between lessons, and group learning sessions. The consistent use of repetition and routine supports children's natural learning processes, enabling them to recognize and gradually memorize religious expressions. Teachers present these materials using songs, rhythmic recitation, and visual aids, making learning more engaging and accessible. This integration ensures that religious learning becomes a natural part of children's daily experiences rather than a separate or isolated activity.

The concept of *ibadah* at KB Tunas Harapan is also expanded beyond ritual practices to include moral and social behaviors that reflect Islamic values. Teachers emphasize that actions such as honesty, kindness toward peers, helping others, and caring for the environment are also forms of worship when performed with sincere intentions. For example, children are encouraged to dispose of waste properly, share with friends, and speak politely as expressions of obedience to Allah. By linking everyday behavior with worship, children begin to understand that *ibadah* encompasses all aspects of life. This holistic approach helps children internalize the idea that worship is not limited

to prayer alone, but is reflected in their daily conduct and interactions.

The findings indicate that early exposure to *ibadah* through consistent habituation and positive reinforcement fosters favorable attitudes toward worship among early childhood learners. Observational data show that children gradually demonstrate increased participation, enthusiasm, and confidence in religious activities. Some children voluntarily engage in prayer movements, recite supplications, and remind peers of appropriate behaviors. These behaviors suggest that early worship education contributes to the formation of religious discipline and spiritual awareness. Overall, the introduction of *ibadah* at KB Tunas Harapan supports the development of a balanced religious foundation, preparing children to engage more deeply with worship practices as they mature cognitively and emotionally.

Moral Conduct (*Akhlaq*)

The development of *akhlaq* at KB Tunas Harapan emphasizes moral behavior and social interaction that are firmly rooted in Islamic values. *Akhlaq* is understood as ethical conduct manifested in children's daily actions, speech, and attitudes toward others. Moral education is viewed as an inseparable component of faith (*aqidah*) and worship (*ibadah*), forming a holistic framework of Islamic character education. At the early childhood level, moral development is approached through simple, concrete, and repetitive experiences that align with children's social and emotional development. Rather than delivering moral instruction through abstract explanations, teachers integrate moral values into everyday interactions, enabling children to gradually internalize ethical behavior as a natural part of their daily lives.

Teachers and parents play a central role as moral role models in the development of children's *akhlaq*. Teachers consistently demonstrate values such as kindness, respect, honesty, and patience through their daily interactions with students. This modeling is crucial, as early childhood learners tend to imitate behaviors observed in their immediate environment. The consistency between what teachers say and how they act reinforces moral messages and helps children distinguish appropriate behavior. Parents are also recognized as essential partners in moral education, as children's moral development is strongly influenced by experiences both at school and at home. Effective collaboration between teachers and parents strengthens the continuity of moral guidance across different environments.

Qur'anic teachings, particularly those derived from Surah Luqman verse 14, serve as the foundational reference for moral education at KB Tunas Harapan. The verse emphasizes respect for parents, gratitude, and moral responsibility, which are considered essential values in Islamic character formation. These teachings are not conveyed through direct textual instruction but are translated into practical behaviors that children can easily understand and practice. For example, children are encouraged to express gratitude, obey parents and teachers, and show respect to elders. By contextualizing Qur'anic values into daily routines, moral teachings become relevant and applicable to children's everyday experiences.

Moral values at KB Tunas Harapan are instilled primarily through habituation practices embedded in daily school activities. Children are encouraged to greet others politely, smile at friends, help peers in need, and show respect by kissing the teacher's hand upon arrival and departure. These behaviors are reinforced consistently through teacher reminders, positive feedback, and routine practice. Over time, repetition helps

children internalize these actions as habitual moral behaviors rather than externally imposed rules. The emphasis on habituation reflects an understanding that moral character in early childhood is formed through repeated practice and consistent reinforcement.

Additional learning activities are employed to strengthen moral messages and engage children emotionally. Islamic songs, *shalawat*, and storytelling are used as instructional tools to convey moral lessons in an enjoyable and memorable way. Stories featuring moral themes help children understand concepts such as honesty, cooperation, and empathy through relatable characters and situations. Songs and chants further reinforce positive behavior while creating a joyful learning atmosphere. These methods allow children to associate moral behavior with positive emotional experiences, increasing the likelihood that values will be retained and practiced consistently.

Early moral education based on Islamic values contributes significantly to the development of socially responsible and spiritually aware children. Observations reveal that children gradually demonstrate improved social behavior, such as increased cooperation, respect for others, and willingness to help peers. These outcomes suggest that consistent moral guidance within an Islamic framework effectively supports character development during early childhood. Collaboration between teachers and parents remains essential to ensure consistency in moral expectations and reinforcement across school and home environments. Overall, the cultivation of *akhlaq* at KB Tunas Harapan provides a strong moral foundation that supports children's holistic development and prepares them for future social and spiritual challenges.

Discussion

This study highlights the significance of introducing Islamic values during the early school entry period as a foundational stage in early childhood education. The findings demonstrate that the introduction of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlaq* at KB Tunas Harapan is implemented through developmentally appropriate and context-based learning experiences. This approach is consistent with early childhood education theories which emphasize that young children learn most effectively through concrete experiences, habituation, and social interaction (Gadaire et al., 2020; Setiawati et al., 2023). Integrating Islamic values into daily routines rather than presenting them as isolated lessons supports holistic development, encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions (Candra, 2025; Dian et al., 2023; Öcal & Halmatov, 2021).

The findings related to *aqidah* indicate that faith education in early childhood is most effective when grounded in experiential and contextual learning rather than abstract theological instruction. Children's ability to recognize Allah as the Creator through natural phenomena reflects constructivist learning principles, where knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with the environment (Fitri, 2022; Rambert, 2021). Islamic early childhood education suggest that early spiritual development is strongly influenced by emotional attachment, modeling, and lived experiences rather than doctrinal understanding (Kartika et al., 2023; Kasmah et al., 2023; Widat & Wulandari, 2023). This contextual approach helps children develop positive attitudes toward faith while avoiding cognitive overload during early developmental stages.

The discussion of *ibadah* reveals that habituation plays a central role in fostering early engagement with worship practices. The use of *fasholatan* and routine-based religious activities supports theories of religious socialization, which emphasize

repetition, imitation, and modeling as primary mechanisms for internalizing values in early childhood (Sa'adah & Formen, 2021). Qur'anic guidance, such as that found in Surah Luqman verse 17, reinforces the importance of introducing worship practices gradually and consistently (Al-Hawary et al., 2023; Nurchayani et al., 2023). Presenting worship as an enjoyable and meaningful activity rather than an obligation contributes to intrinsic motivation and long-term religious commitment.

Furthermore, the expansion of *ibadah* to include ethical and social behaviors reflects a holistic understanding of worship in Islamic education. Islamic scholars emphasize that worship encompasses all actions performed with sincere intention, including honesty, kindness, and environmental responsibility (Alghamdi, 2023; Sari, 2023). This finding aligns with contemporary character education frameworks, which stress the integration of moral values into daily behavior rather than treating them as separate instructional content (Faiz et al., 2023; Said & Sharif, 2023; Saihu et al., 2022). By linking everyday actions with worship, children develop a comprehensive understanding of religion as a way of life rather than a set of ritual practices alone.

The findings related to *akhlaq* underscore the importance of habituation and role modeling in early moral development. Consistent moral practices, such as greeting others politely and showing respect to elders, reinforce ethical behavior through repetition and social reinforcement. This supports social learning theory, which emphasizes that children learn moral behavior primarily through observation and imitation of significant adults (Ataman & Safitri, 2024; Hastasari et al., 2022; Mutmainnah et al., 2024). The use of storytelling, songs, and positive reinforcement further enhances emotional engagement, making moral learning more meaningful and sustainable (Qiptiyah, 2020).

Another important aspect highlighted in this study is the role of collaboration between teachers and parents in reinforcing Islamic values. Ecological theories of child development emphasize that children's behavior is shaped through interactions across multiple environments, particularly the family and school (Saracho, 2023). When parents and educators share consistent values and practices, children receive coherent moral messages that support internalization of religious and ethical behavior. This consistency is especially crucial in early childhood, when children rely heavily on adult guidance to form moral judgments.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on Islamic early childhood education by demonstrating that the introduction of Islamic values during the early school entry period can be effectively implemented through contextual, experiential, and habituation-based approaches. The importance of early religious and moral education in shaping lifelong character development. Although this study is context-specific, it provides practical insights for educators seeking to integrate Islamic values into developmentally appropriate learning environments. Future research may explore longitudinal impacts and comparative studies across different educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the introduction of Islamic values during the early school entry period is essential for supporting the holistic development of early childhood learners. The findings indicate that Islamic values education at KB Tunas Harapan is effectively implemented through the integration of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlaq* into daily learning activities using developmentally appropriate, contextual, and experiential approaches. The introduction of *aqidah* through real-life experiences helps children

recognize Allah as the Creator, while *ibadah* practices delivered through habituation and play-based routines foster positive attitudes toward worship. Meanwhile, the cultivation of *akhlaq* through daily moral habituation supports the formation of ethical behavior and social responsibility in early childhood.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of habituation, role modeling, and consistent reinforcement in facilitating the internalization of Islamic values. Collaboration between teachers and parents emerges as a crucial factor in ensuring continuity of values education across school and home environments. Although the findings are context-specific, they provide meaningful insights for early childhood educators and Islamic education practitioners seeking to integrate religious values into early learning settings. Future research is encouraged to examine the long-term effects of early Islamic values education and its application in broader educational contexts.

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