
ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH AT RA WADI FATIMAH IN CIREBON***¹Lisva Azzahrotul Jannah, ²Khofifah*****^{1,2}UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon**Email: ¹lisvaazzah5309@gmail.com, ²khofifahmadrawi02@gmail.com**Abstract**

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in instilling moral values and shaping the character of young children. Early childhood is a golden period in a child's personality development, thus requiring a learning approach that aligns with their psychological characteristics and developmental stages. This study aims to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education in instilling moral values in young children through a developmental psychology approach, as well as to analyze the implementation of PAI instruction, the roles of teachers and parents, and their impact on children's moral behavior. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive qualitative research design. The research was conducted at Wadi Fatimah Islamic Kindergarten, Kedawung Subdistrict, Cirebon Regency, with the research subjects being classroom teachers and parents of students selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed descriptively to obtain a comprehensive picture of the process and results of instilling moral values in children. The research results indicate that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through habit formation, modeling, and contextual learning activities is capable of positively shaping children's moral behavior. The developmental psychology approach helps children understand moral values through concrete experiences and behavioral reinforcement. Additionally, collaboration between teachers and parents has proven to play a crucial role in strengthening the internalization of moral values in children, both at school and within the family environment. This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education designed in accordance with the principles of early childhood developmental psychology is effective in instilling moral values and is worthy of being used as a reference in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the early childhood education level.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, children's morality, early childhood, developmental psychology

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memiliki peran strategis dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moral dan membentuk karakter anak usia dini. Masa usia dini merupakan periode emas dalam perkembangan kepribadian anak, sehingga diperlukan pendekatan pembelajaran yang sesuai dengan karakteristik psikologis dan tahap perkembangan mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam penanaman moral anak usia dini melalui pendekatan psikologi perkembangan, serta menganalisis

implementasi pembelajaran PAI, peran guru dan orang tua, dan dampaknya terhadap perilaku moral anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Lokasi penelitian dilakukan di TK Islam Wadi Fatimah, Kecamatan Kedawung, Kabupaten Cirebon, dengan subjek penelitian guru kelas dan orang tua siswa yang dipilih secara purposive. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif untuk memperoleh gambaran menyeluruh mengenai proses dan hasil penanaman nilai moral anak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Pendidikan Agama Islam yang dilakukan melalui pembiasaan, keteladanan, dan kegiatan pembelajaran yang kontekstual mampu membentuk perilaku moral anak secara positif. Pendekatan psikologi perkembangan membantu anak memahami nilai moral melalui pengalaman konkret dan penguatan perilaku. Selain itu, kolaborasi antara guru dan orang tua terbukti berperan penting dalam memperkuat internalisasi nilai moral anak baik di sekolah maupun di lingkungan keluarga. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Pendidikan Agama Islam yang dirancang sesuai dengan prinsip psikologi perkembangan anak usia dini efektif dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moral dan layak dijadikan acuan dalam pengembangan pembelajaran PAI pada jenjang pendidikan anak usia dini.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, moral anak, anak usia dini, psikologi perkembangan

PENDAHULUAN

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) for early childhood is a fundamental aspect in shaping children's morals and character from the earliest stages of life. Early childhood is known as the "golden age," during which a child's personality structure and value system begin to take shape significantly (Zainuddin et al., 2024). According to the Islamic educational perspective, children are born in a state of pure fitrah, as explained in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), so the educational environment plays a decisive role in guiding children's moral and spiritual development. In line with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, young children are in the preoperational stage, where learning is most effective through concrete experiences, symbols, and habituation. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at this level must be delivered through an approach aligned with children's psychological developmental characteristics to ensure moral values are internalized optimally (Zainuddin et al., 2024).

Literature reviews indicate that Islamic Religious Education contributes to the formation of children's religious attitudes and moral behavior, particularly through the methods of modeling, habit formation, and value reinforcement. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development asserts that young children are in the preconventional stage, where moral judgments are based on immediate consequences and concrete examples from the surrounding environment (Permana et al., 2025). However, most previous studies have still emphasized normative and doctrinal aspects in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction, without systematically linking them to theories of child developmental psychology. A research gap is evident in the lack of integration between the concepts of Islamic Religious Education and the theoretical framework of developmental psychology within the context of learning practices in early childhood education institutions, leaving

opportunities for the development of a more holistic approach still open (Permana et al., 2025).

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education in instilling moral values in early childhood through a developmental psychology approach. This study seeks to analyze Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning strategies aligned with children's cognitive, emotional, and moral developmental stages, drawing on Piaget's theory, Kohlberg's theory, and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and the educator's role as a scaffold in children's learning processes (Seprya & Hariati, 2024). The novelty of this study lies in the effort to integrate the values of Islamic Religious Education with developmental psychology theories in an applied manner through field research, thereby producing a contextual model for moral instillation that aligns with the developmental needs of young children (Huliyah, 2021).

The hypothesis of this study is that Islamic Religious Education designed based on the principles of early childhood developmental psychology has a significant effect on the instillation of moral values in children. The more appropriate the selection of methods, materials, and approaches to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) tailored to children's developmental stages, the more effective the process of internalizing moral values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and social concern in children's daily lives (Darwati, 2021).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, specifically a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of instilling moral values in early childhood through Islamic Religious Education within the context of natural and real-life experiences. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to comprehensively explore the meanings, understandings, and subjective experiences of the research subjects. The primary focus of this study is not on numerical measurements or statistics, but rather on the learning process, social interactions, and the dynamics of moral values developing in children. Thus, this approach is deemed appropriate for obtaining a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study (Waruwu, 2023)

The research was conducted over approximately one month, specifically in October 2025. The research location was at Wadi Fatimah Islamic Kindergarten, Kedawung Subdistrict, Cirebon Regency. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the institution consistently implements Islamic Religious Education in both learning activities and daily routines. Additionally, this school has a religious environment that supports the moral development of young children. The research subjects consisted of classroom teachers and parents of students selected through purposive sampling. The selection of subjects was based on their direct involvement in the educational process and the moral development of children.

Data sources in this study include primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through observation and in-depth interviews with three parents and two classroom teachers. This data was used to explore experiences, perceptions, and actual practices regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in shaping children's morals, both in the school and family environments. Primary data is considered important because it is current and relevant to the research focus. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various written sources, such as books, scientific journals, and relevant articles. Secondary data serves as a theoretical foundation and support in analyzing the research results (Juliani & Syahbudin, 2025)

The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is conducted to directly observe the Islamic Religious Education learning process as well as children's moral behavior in daily activities at school. This technique allows the researcher to obtain factual data regarding children's attitudes, habits, and social interactions. Interviews were used to obtain more in-depth information regarding the views, experiences, and interpretations of teachers and parents regarding the instillation of moral values in children. Documentation in the form of learning materials, activity records, and photographs was used to strengthen and validate the research findings, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the data (Rivaldi et al., 2023)

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The Implementation of Islamic Religious Education in the Moral Development of Young Children The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in the moral development of young children theoretically focuses on the internalization of religious values through approaches appropriate to the child's developmental stage. Developmental psychology theories, as proposed by Piaget and Erikson, emphasize that young children are in the preoperational and trust vs. autonomy stages, during which they learn through direct experience, imitation, and habituation. In the context of PAI, this approach is realized through the habituation of religious behaviors, teacher role modeling, Islamic stories, prayers, and simple worship activities, so that moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social concern can be instilled from an early age. With this strategy, religious education is not merely cognitive but also shapes children's moral attitudes and behaviors, in accordance with the principle of *uswah hasanah* and psychosocial development theory, which form the foundation of a strong character in the future (Syakhrani, 2025).

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Wadi Fatimah Islamic Kindergarten is carried out through structured learning activities and habits integrated into the school's daily routine (Munawaroh, 2024). Teachers convey Islamic values through activities such as group prayers, stories of the Prophet, character education, and simple worship practices adapted to the children's age. This approach facilitates children's understanding of moral concepts through direct and repeated experiences. Observation results indicate that children begin to recognize good and bad behavior

through consistently conducted PAI activities. The learning process occurs naturally without pressure, allowing children to feel comfortable and enthusiastic about participating in the activities. This demonstrates that the contextual implementation of PAI can serve as an effective means for shaping the moral character of young children (Fadhilah & Mahmudah, 2025).

In addition to classroom learning activities, the implementation of PAI is also reflected in a religious and supportive school culture. Teachers play an active role as role models in demonstrating honesty, discipline, politeness, and responsibility in daily interactions. Young children tend to imitate the behavior of adults close to them, so teachers' exemplary conduct has a significant influence on children's moral development. A school environment that supports Islamic values helps children understand that religious teachings are not merely studied but also practiced. Thus, Islamic Education (PAI) functions not only as a formal subject but also as a living value in children's daily lives. Such implementation strengthens the process of moral internalization in a gradual and sustainable manner.

The role of the family environment further reinforces the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) applied at school. Based on interview results, parents stated that the values taught at school are continued in daily life at home. Children are encouraged to pray, behave politely, and practice honesty in family interactions. The continuity between education at school and at home creates consistency in moral learning for children. This situation helps children understand that moral values apply across various environments. Through the synergy between school and family, the process of children's moral development becomes more optimal (Aziddin, 2025).

These research findings align with Islamic educational theory, which emphasizes the importance of the environment in shaping children's personality and character. Moral education cannot be effective if conducted in only one environment.

Children require consistent moral experiences to fully internalize moral teachings. Therefore, the comprehensive, sustained, and multi-stakeholder implementation of Islamic Education (PAI) is a key factor in the success of moral development in early childhood. This study's results affirm that schools and families play complementary roles. Their collaboration serves as the primary foundation for children's moral education.

Instilling Moral Values in Early Childhood through a Developmental Psychology Approach

Instilling moral values in early childhood through a developmental psychology approach emphasizes aligning educational methods with children's cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages. According to Piaget's theory, young children are in the preoperational stage, so they learn through concrete experiences, imitation, and symbolization. Meanwhile, Erikson's theory states that children at this age are in the initiative vs. guilt phase, where they begin to develop a sense of responsibility, initiative, and morality through interaction with their environment. This developmental psychology

approach promotes the gradual instillation of moral values through habit formation, educational games, moral stories, and the example set by teachers or parents, so that children can naturally understand moral concepts such as honesty, empathy, discipline, and cooperation, while adapting to their cognitive and emotional capabilities. Thus, moral values are not merely learned theoretically but internalized through daily experiences in accordance with children's psychological development (Manoppo et al., 2022).

The instillation of moral values through Islamic Religious Education at Wadi Fatimah Islamic Kindergarten is conducted by considering the stages of children's psychological development. Teachers adapt teaching methods to the cognitive and emotional capabilities of young children. The methods used include Islamic songs, educational games, picture stories, and symbolic activities that capture the children's attention. This approach helps children understand moral values in a simple and enjoyable way. The learning process takes place without coercion, making it easier for children to accept and remember the values taught. This highlights the importance of aligning teaching methods with the children's developmental stages (Arifah, 2024).

Interview results indicate that children more easily grasp concepts of honesty, responsibility, and social concern through concrete experiences. Children learn moral values from real-life situations they encounter during daily school activities. Moral education is not conveyed through abstract explanations but through meaningful hands-on practice. This approach naturally reinforces children's understanding of moral values. Children are also more active and responsive in participating in learning. This finding supports the view that moral education for young children must be contextual.

The developmental psychology approach is also reflected in how teachers provide behavioral reinforcement. Teachers offer praise, appreciation, and positive reinforcement for the good behavior demonstrated by children. This strategy helps children understand that positive behavior receives a positive response from the environment. In line with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, young children are at the preconventional stage, where they judge right and wrong based on immediate consequences. Therefore, positive reinforcement is an effective strategy in moral development. Children become more motivated to repeat good behavior (Wulandari et al., 2025).

Thus, instilling moral values through a developmental psychology approach has proven effective in PAI education. This approach allows moral values to be instilled in accordance with the child's abilities and needs. Children not only understand moral values but are also able to practice them in daily life. The learning process occurs gradually and continuously. This indicates that the integration of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) with developmental psychology makes a positive contribution to the moral development of young children. This approach is worthy of broader implementation in early childhood education.

The Role of Teachers and Parents in Children's Moral Development

Teachers play a central role in children's moral development through Islamic Religious Education. Teachers function not only as instructors but also as educators and moral role models for children (Judrah et al., 2024). Research findings indicate that teachers' attitudes and behaviors significantly influence how children understand moral values. Teacher role modeling is the most effective method in the moral education of young children. Children tend to imitate behaviors they frequently observe in daily life. Therefore, the consistency of a teacher's attitudes is crucial to the success of children's moral development.

On the other hand, parents play a vital role in reinforcing the moral values instilled at school. Interviews with parents indicate an awareness of the need to apply Islamic Religious Education (IRE) values within the family environment. Parents encourage children to pray, behave politely, and take responsibility for simple tasks at home. The family environment serves as the primary setting where children practice the moral values they have learned. With parental support, children gain broader moral experiences. This reinforces the continuous process of internalizing values.

Collaboration between teachers and parents is a key supporting factor in children's moral development. Effective communication between school and family creates harmony in educational and parenting approaches. Children receive the same moral messages both at school and at home. This consistency helps children understand moral values more deeply. Thus, moral education does not operate in isolation. Synergy between teachers and parents is the key to the success of character education for young children.

These findings align with developmental ecology theory, which states that children's development is influenced by various interacting environments. Teachers and parents are the closest environments with significant influence on children's moral development. Positive interaction between both parties creates a conducive learning environment. Moral education becomes more effective when conducted collaboratively. Therefore, the active involvement of teachers and parents is essential. This collaboration serves as the primary foundation for shaping the character of young children.

The Impact of Islamic Religious Education on the Moral Behavior of Young Children

Research findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education has a positive impact on the moral behavior of young children. Children exhibit behavioral changes such as being more polite, disciplined, and obedient to rules. Additionally, children begin to demonstrate empathy toward their peers. These behavioral changes result from the habits and role modeling implemented in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lessons. The learning process is consistent and ongoing. This indicates that IRE plays a crucial role in shaping children's moral behavior. Observations in the school environment reveal that children are beginning to distinguish between good and bad behavior. Children also demonstrate an awareness to perform good deeds without always needing to be reminded by teachers. This signifies the development of a process of internalizing moral values.

Children do not merely follow rules out of obedience but also due to the simple understanding they possess. This process unfolds gradually in accordance with the child's age and developmental stage. Thus, Islamic Education makes a tangible contribution to building children's moral awareness (Yanti et al., 2023). The positive impact of Islamic Religious Education is also felt by parents within the family environment. Parents report that children are beginning to apply the values learned at school in their daily lives. Children have become accustomed to praying, speaking honestly, and behaving politely at home. These changes indicate that Islamic Religious Education learning does not stop at school. The moral values instilled are carried over into the family environment. This reinforces the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in children's lives (Lidiawati & Purnama, 2023).

Overall, the research findings confirm that Islamic Religious Education designed in accordance with the developmental psychology of early childhood is capable of effectively shaping moral behavior. Contextual, consistent learning that involves the roles of both teachers and parents is a key factor in its success. Children not only understand moral values theoretically but are also able to practice them in daily life. The process of moral development occurs naturally and continuously. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in the character education of young children. This approach is worthy of being adopted as a guideline in the development of PAI instruction at the early childhood education (PAUD) level (Gulo & Ridha, 2025).

KESIMPULAN

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education plays a very important role in instilling moral values in young children through the processes of learning, habit formation, and consistent modeling. The implementation of Islamic Religious Education adapted to a developmental psychology approach can help children understand and internalize moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social concern more effectively and meaningfully. Adapting teaching methods and strategies to children's cognitive, emotional, and social developmental stages makes the educational process more contextual and aligned with the needs of young children. Furthermore, synergistic cooperation between teachers and parents strengthens the success of instilling moral values, as it ensures consistency in habit formation between the school and family environments. Thus, Islamic Religious Education grounded in developmental psychology significantly contributes to shaping the character and morality of young children in a holistic and sustainable manner.

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