

Research Article

Islamic Value Internalization Strategies For Early Childhood Character Development In Quranic Learning Centers

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Abstract

Character education is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development because it shapes children's personality, behavior, and moral values from an early age. In Islamic education, character formation is directed toward developing noble character (akhlaq al-karimah) based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic value internalization employed in Quranic Learning Centers (Rumah Qur'an) and their contribution to early childhood character development. This research employed a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were collected from books, scientific journals, research articles, and other relevant academic sources published within the last eight years. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis to identify patterns and strategies related to the internalization of Islamic values in early childhood education. The findings indicate that the internalization of Islamic values in Quranic Learning Centers is implemented through several key strategies, including exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah), habituation of Islamic practices, storytelling and moral advice, the establishment of a religious learning environment, and collaboration between educational institutions and parents. These strategies effectively foster religious character, discipline, responsibility, politeness, empathy, and independence among children. The study concludes that Quranic Learning Centers play a significant role in strengthening Islamic character education and can serve as an effective alternative for character development amid contemporary moral and technological challenges.

Keywords: Islamic Value Internalization, Character Education, Early Childhood, Quranic Learning Centers, Islamic education.

Abstrak

Pendidikan karakter merupakan aspek fundamental dalam perkembangan anak usia dini karena berperan dalam membentuk kepribadian, perilaku, dan nilai moral sejak usia dini. Dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam, pembentukan karakter diarahkan pada pengembangan akhlak mulia yang berlandaskan ajaran Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam yang diterapkan di Rumah Qur'an serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan karakter anak usia dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka (library research). Data diperoleh dari buku, jurnal ilmiah, artikel penelitian, dan berbagai sumber akademik relevan yang diterbitkan dalam delapan tahun terakhir. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi (content analysis) untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan strategi internalisasi nilai Islam dalam pendidikan anak usia dini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai Islam di Rumah Qur'an dilakukan melalui beberapa strategi utama, yaitu keteladanan (uswah hasanah), pembiasaan perilaku islami, metode cerita dan nasihat, penciptaan lingkungan religius, serta kolaborasi antara lembaga pendidikan dan orang tua. Strategi tersebut terbukti efektif dalam membentuk karakter religius, disiplin, tanggung jawab, sopan santun, empati, dan kemandirian anak. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Rumah Qur'an memiliki peran yang signifikan dalam memperkuat pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai Islam dan dapat menjadi alternatif pendidikan yang efektif dalam menghadapi tantangan moral serta perkembangan teknologi di era modern.

Kata Kunci: Internalisasi Nilai Islam, Pendidikan Karakter, Anak Usia Dini, Rumah Qur'an, Pendidikan Islam.

PENDAHULUAN

Character education has become a major concern in contemporary educational discourse due to its crucial role in shaping children's personality, moral behavior, and social responsibility. Early childhood is widely recognized as a critical period of human development because cognitive, emotional, social, and moral foundations are established during this stage. Therefore, educational interventions implemented in early childhood significantly influence children's future attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making processes. Recent studies indicate that character formation in early childhood should not only focus on cognitive development but also emphasize moral, spiritual, and socio-emotional growth to prepare children for the challenges of an increasingly complex society (Az-zahra, 2024; Hikmah, 2024).

The urgency of character education has increased in the digital era. The rapid advancement of information technology, social media, and digital communication has transformed children's learning environments and social interactions. While technological development provides educational opportunities, it also exposes children to various risks, including reduced social interaction, moral degradation, excessive dependence on digital devices, and weakened ethical awareness. Recent research emphasizes that moral and character education must be strengthened to help children navigate contemporary social and technological challenges while maintaining positive values and ethical behavior (Mahfud, 2025; Hairani & Conermann, 2025).

Within the Islamic educational perspective, character education is closely associated with the concept of *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character). Islamic education does not merely aim to transfer knowledge but seeks to develop individuals who possess faith (*iman*), piety (*taqwa*), and exemplary moral conduct. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide comprehensive guidance regarding ethical values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, compassion, respect, justice, and social concern.

Consequently, character formation constitutes an integral component of Islamic education and serves as a primary objective in nurturing balanced individuals who contribute positively to society (Pamuji & Mulyadi, 2024; Mahfud, 2025).

One of the essential processes in Islamic character education is the internalization of Islamic values. Internalization refers to the process through which external values become integrated into an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. In early childhood education, this process is particularly important because young children learn primarily through observation, imitation, habituation, and direct experience rather than abstract reasoning. Previous studies reveal that the successful internalization of Islamic values requires continuous reinforcement through role modeling, religious practices, supportive learning environments, and meaningful social interactions (Tambak et al., 2021; Waluyo, 2025).

Various studies have demonstrated that religious values can be effectively integrated into character education through habituation-based activities and daily religious practices. Activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, memorization, charity programs, and religious extracurricular activities have been found to contribute significantly to the development of discipline, responsibility, social awareness, and spiritual maturity among learners (Jakandar, 2025; Trisnantari, 2026). Furthermore, the role of teachers as moral exemplars remains central because children naturally imitate behaviors exhibited by significant adults in their environment. Qur'anic pedagogical approaches emphasize the importance of advice (*mau'izah*), exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), and habituation as effective methods for moral and spiritual formation among children (Farida, 2025).

In the context of early childhood education, Quranic Learning Centers (*Rumah Qur'an*) have emerged as important non-formal educational institutions dedicated to Qur'anic learning and Islamic character development. Unlike many formal educational institutions that allocate limited instructional time for religious education, Quranic Learning Centers provide intensive opportunities for children to engage in Qur'anic learning, religious practices, and character-building activities. Their educational environment is intentionally designed to foster Islamic values through daily routines, teacher-student interactions, and community-based learning experiences. Recent studies suggest that Islamic educational environments significantly contribute to children's moral development, social-emotional growth, and religious identity formation (Saona, 2025; Mukarromah, 2025).

Several studies have examined Islamic character education in formal schools, Islamic boarding schools, and early childhood education institutions. Research has explored the integration of Islamic education into early childhood curricula, the implementation of religious character education, and the role of Islamic school culture in shaping student behavior (Shiddiq, 2024; Arif, 2024; *Integration of Islamic Education into Early Childhood Education*, 2024).

Other scholars have investigated the effectiveness of Islamic values-based character education in promoting children's social-emotional development and moral awareness (Saona, 2025; Nurjamilah, 2024).

However, despite the growing body of literature on Islamic character education, limited attention has been given specifically to the strategies employed by

Quranic Learning Centers in internalizing Islamic values among early childhood learners. Existing studies tend to focus on formal educational institutions, pesantren, or general Islamic educational settings, while the unique educational practices and character-building approaches implemented in Quranic Learning Centers remain underexplored. This limitation creates a research gap concerning how these institutions effectively cultivate religious values and character formation among young children through non-formal educational approaches.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic value internalization implemented in Quranic Learning Centers and examine their contribution to early childhood character development. Specifically, the study investigates the roles of exemplary behavior, habituation, Islamic storytelling, religious environmental conditioning, and collaboration between educational institutions and parents in fostering children's character. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic character education models that are relevant to contemporary educational challenges and the moral needs of future generations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using the library research method. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena through the interpretation and analysis of textual data, concepts, and scholarly arguments. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring the processes, meanings, and contexts underlying educational practices and social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In the context of this study, the qualitative approach was used to examine the strategies of Islamic value internalization implemented in Quranic Learning Centers (Rumah Qur'an) and their contribution to early childhood character development.

Library research was adopted as the primary research design because the study focused on synthesizing and critically analyzing existing scholarly literature related to Islamic value internalization, character education, early childhood education, and Quranic Learning Centers. According to Snyder (2019), library research enables researchers to identify patterns, theoretical perspectives, and empirical findings from previous studies to generate a comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic. Through this method, the study explored various educational strategies that have been reported and discussed in contemporary academic literature.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included peer-reviewed journal articles published in national and international journals that specifically discussed Islamic character education, value internalization, religious learning environments, and early childhood education. Secondary sources included academic books, conference proceedings, theses, dissertations, government documents, and other scholarly publications relevant to the research topic. To ensure the relevance and currency of the findings, priority was given to literature published between 2021 and 2026, although seminal works were also consulted to strengthen the theoretical framework.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques. The researcher systematically searched, identified, selected, and reviewed relevant literature from various academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, DOAJ, ERIC, Garuda, and other reputable academic repositories. Several keywords were used during the search process, including “Islamic value internalization,” “Islamic character education,” “early childhood education,” “religious habituation,” “Quranic Learning Centers,” “Islamic moral development,” and “Islamic educational environment.” The collected literature was then screened based on its relevance, credibility, publication quality, and contribution to the research objectives.

The data analysis process employed qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic method used to examine textual information by identifying themes, patterns, meanings, and relationships within documents (Krippendorff, 2019). This technique was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore and interpret educational strategies discussed in various scholarly works. The analysis was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher performed data reduction by selecting information directly related to Islamic value internalization and character formation. Second, the selected data were categorized into thematic groups, including exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), religious habituation, Islamic storytelling, moral advice, religious environmental conditioning, and parental involvement. Third, the categorized data were interpreted and synthesized to identify common patterns and educational implications.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from multiple scholarly sources, educational theories, and empirical studies to ensure consistency and accuracy of interpretation. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), triangulation strengthens the validity of qualitative research by minimizing subjective bias and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, prolonged engagement with the literature and repeated review of selected sources were conducted to improve analytical rigor and ensure a deeper understanding of the research topic.

The focus of this study was limited to the strategies of Islamic value internalization used in Quranic Learning Centers for fostering character development among early childhood learners. Specifically, the study examined how educational practices such as role modeling, habituation, storytelling, religious environmental conditioning, and collaboration between educators and parents contribute to the development of religious character, discipline, responsibility, politeness, empathy, social awareness, and independence among children. Through this methodological framework, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of effective Islamic character education practices that can be implemented in non-formal educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Islamic Value Internalization in Early Childhood Education

Islamic value internalization refers to a continuous process through which Islamic teachings, beliefs, and moral principles become integrated into an individual's

personality and daily behavior. In the context of early childhood education, internalization is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge but encompasses the development of attitudes, habits, and behavioral patterns that reflect Islamic values. This process is particularly important during early childhood because children are in a critical developmental stage characterized by high receptivity to environmental influences and behavioral modeling.

Contemporary educational theories emphasize that value acquisition among young children occurs primarily through experiential learning rather than abstract instruction. Children learn by observing, imitating, and repeatedly practicing behaviors that are reinforced within their social environment. This perspective aligns with Islamic educational principles, which emphasize the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in the formation of character. According to Tambak et al. (2021), the successful internalization of Islamic values requires a systematic process involving religious experiences, role modeling, habituation, and social interaction. These elements collectively contribute to the development of a child's moral consciousness and spiritual identity.

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic value internalization in Quranic Learning Centers is implemented through a holistic educational approach that integrates religious instruction with daily behavioral practices. Rather than focusing exclusively on Qur'anic literacy, these institutions seek to cultivate children's character by embedding Islamic values into routine activities and interpersonal interactions. This finding supports the argument of Rahman and Hashim (2023), who state that effective Islamic education should integrate faith, knowledge, and character development within a unified educational framework.

Several Islamic values were consistently identified in the reviewed literature as foundational components of character formation. These values include religiosity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, empathy, social awareness, and independence. Religious values serve as the primary foundation because they shape children's relationship with Allah and influence their interactions with others. Through daily religious practices such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, remembrance (dhikr), and supplication (du'a), children gradually develop spiritual awareness and positive behavioral dispositions.

Furthermore, the internalization of Islamic values contributes significantly to children's social-emotional development. Research by Nurjamilah (2024) demonstrates that children exposed to value-based Islamic education exhibit higher levels of empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation compared to those who receive predominantly academic-oriented instruction. This finding suggests that Islamic value internalization not only strengthens religious commitment but also promotes social competence and emotional well-being.

The findings also reveal that the effectiveness of value internalization depends largely on the consistency of educational experiences provided by both institutions and families. Islamic values become deeply embedded when children encounter similar expectations, behavioral standards, and moral messages across different environments. Therefore, character formation should be viewed as a collaborative process involving educational institutions, parents, and the broader community.

Consistent reinforcement across these settings increases the likelihood that values will become enduring aspects of children's personalities.

The Role of Quranic Learning Centers in Early Childhood Character Development

Quranic Learning Centers (Rumah Qur'an) have emerged as important non-formal educational institutions that contribute significantly to Islamic character education. Unlike conventional educational settings that often prioritize academic achievement, Quranic Learning Centers emphasize the balanced development of spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions. Their educational programs are specifically designed to nurture children's understanding of Islamic teachings while simultaneously cultivating desirable character traits.

The literature reviewed in this study indicates that Quranic Learning Centers function as environments where religious values are continuously practiced and reinforced. Children are not only taught how to read and memorize the Qur'an but are also encouraged to apply Islamic teachings in their daily behavior. Activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, greeting others with salam, maintaining cleanliness, respecting elders, and helping peers are routinely integrated into the learning process.

This educational approach reflects the concept of holistic Islamic education, which views character development as inseparable from religious learning. According to Pamuji and Mulyadi (2024), Islamic educational institutions that successfully integrate religious instruction with character-building activities demonstrate greater effectiveness in fostering positive behavioral outcomes among learners. The findings of the present study support this assertion, as Quranic Learning Centers provide structured opportunities for children to translate religious knowledge into practical actions.

Another significant role of Quranic Learning Centers lies in their ability to create a supportive religious environment. Environmental factors have long been recognized as powerful determinants of child development. In a religiously oriented environment, children are exposed to positive behavioral norms, moral expectations, and spiritual practices that influence their attitudes and actions. The presence of teachers who consistently model Islamic values further reinforces children's learning experiences and facilitates moral development.

Moreover, the family-like atmosphere commonly found in Quranic Learning Centers contributes to children's emotional security and sense of belonging. Positive relationships between teachers and students encourage trust, openness, and active participation in learning activities. Research conducted by Saona (2025) indicates that supportive educational relationships significantly enhance children's moral engagement and willingness to adopt prosocial behaviors. Consequently, Quranic Learning Centers serve not only as centers of religious learning but also as communities that nurture children's overall character development.

The findings suggest that Quranic Learning Centers occupy a strategic position in addressing contemporary challenges related to moral degradation and weakening social values among young children. By providing consistent exposure to Islamic

teachings and character-building experiences, these institutions help prepare children to become morally responsible individuals capable of navigating modern societal challenges while maintaining their religious identity.

Strategies of Islamic Value Internalization in Quranic Learning Centers Exemplary Behavior (Uswah Hasanah) as a Character-Building Strategy

Among the various approaches employed in Quranic Learning Centers, exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah) emerges as one of the most influential strategies for character formation. In Islamic educational philosophy, educators are expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to serve as living examples of Islamic values. Young children possess a strong tendency to imitate the attitudes, behaviors, and communication styles of significant adults in their environment. Consequently, the moral quality of teachers directly affects children's character development.

The literature indicates that teachers who consistently demonstrate honesty, patience, discipline, responsibility, and compassion create powerful learning experiences for children. Through daily observation, children internalize these values and gradually adopt similar behavioral patterns. This finding aligns with the social learning theory proposed by Bandura, which emphasizes observation and imitation as central mechanisms of learning. Within Islamic education, the concept of uswah hasanah is rooted in the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), whose character serves as the ultimate model for Muslims.

Recent studies have shown that teacher role modeling significantly influences children's moral reasoning and behavioral consistency (Farida, 2025; Hikmah, 2024). When teachers consistently practice what they teach, children perceive moral values as authentic and meaningful. Conversely, inconsistency between verbal instruction and actual behavior may weaken the effectiveness of character education. Therefore, exemplary conduct remains a foundational element in the successful internalization of Islamic values.

Habituation as a Strategy for Sustainable Character Formation

Habituation represents another essential strategy employed in Quranic Learning Centers. Habituation refers to the repeated practice of positive behaviors until they become integrated into an individual's daily routine and personal character. Islamic educational traditions emphasize the importance of repetitive actions in developing virtuous habits and moral discipline.

The reviewed studies reveal that Quranic Learning Centers implement habituation through various daily activities, including greeting others with salam, reciting prayers before and after learning sessions, performing congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, maintaining cleanliness, respecting elders, and practicing orderly behavior. Through repeated exposure to these activities, children gradually develop behavioral patterns consistent with Islamic teachings.

From a developmental perspective, habituation is particularly effective during early childhood because children learn most efficiently through repetition and routine. Positive behaviors reinforced consistently are more likely to become permanent habits. Research conducted by Jakandar (2025) demonstrates that religious

habituation significantly contributes to the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and moral awareness among young learners.

Furthermore, habituation provides practical opportunities for children to experience Islamic values rather than merely learning about them conceptually. By engaging directly in religious practices, children develop emotional attachment and personal commitment to the values being taught. This experiential learning process strengthens the internalization of moral principles and facilitates long-term character development.

Islamic Storytelling and Moral Advice

Storytelling constitutes one of the most effective pedagogical strategies in early childhood education. Children naturally enjoy narratives, imaginative experiences, and meaningful stories. Consequently, Islamic stories provide an engaging medium through which moral lessons and religious values can be communicated effectively.

Quranic Learning Centers frequently utilize stories of the Prophets, companions, and other exemplary figures in Islamic history to illustrate virtues such as honesty, patience, courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and obedience to Allah. Through these narratives, abstract moral concepts become concrete and understandable for young learners.

The literature suggests that storytelling contributes not only to moral development but also to language acquisition, emotional intelligence, and cognitive growth. Hidayati (2024) found that storytelling enhances children's empathy and moral comprehension by encouraging them to reflect on the experiences and decisions of story characters. This process enables children to distinguish between desirable and undesirable behaviors while developing emotional sensitivity toward others.

In addition to storytelling, teachers frequently provide moral advice (*mau'izah*) in a gentle and supportive manner. Rather than relying on punishment, educators encourage reflection and self-correction by explaining the consequences of actions from an Islamic perspective. Such an approach fosters intrinsic motivation and helps children develop moral awareness based on understanding rather than fear.

Religious Environmental Conditioning

The educational environment plays a critical role in shaping children's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Quranic Learning Centers intentionally create religious environments that continuously expose children to Islamic values and practices. This strategy, often referred to as environmental conditioning, ensures that moral messages are reinforced through both formal instruction and everyday experiences.

Several environmental elements contribute to value internalization, including Qur'anic recitations, Islamic decorations, daily prayers, religious routines, respectful communication, and community worship activities. These elements create an atmosphere that encourages children to perceive Islamic values as natural and integral components of daily life.

The findings indicate that a religious environment significantly enhances children's spiritual awareness and behavioral consistency. Children who spend

substantial time in such environments demonstrate greater commitment to religious practices and stronger adherence to moral standards. Similar findings were reported by Ismail and Nurhayati (2023), who concluded that religious educational environments positively influence children's character formation and social behavior.

Environmental conditioning also supports peer learning. Children observe and imitate not only teachers but also their peers. When positive behaviors become social norms within a learning community, children are more likely to adopt and maintain those behaviors. Thus, the collective culture of Quranic Learning Centers contributes significantly to character development.

Collaboration Between Educational Institutions and Parents

The findings consistently emphasize the importance of collaboration between Quranic Learning Centers and families. Parents serve as children's primary educators and play a crucial role in reinforcing values learned within educational institutions. Without parental support, the effectiveness of character education may be substantially reduced.

Effective collaboration involves regular communication, shared educational goals, parental participation in religious activities, and consistency in behavioral expectations. When Islamic values taught at Quranic Learning Centers are reinforced at home, children receive coherent moral messages that strengthen internalization.

Recent studies indicate that parental involvement positively affects children's religious commitment, emotional development, and behavioral consistency (Latif, 2024; Mukarromah, 2025). Children whose parents actively participate in character education programs demonstrate stronger adherence to Islamic values and greater responsibility in daily life.

Therefore, character education should be understood as a collaborative process rather than the sole responsibility of educational institutions. Sustainable character formation requires synergy among teachers, parents, and the broader community.

Character Traits Developed Through Islamic Value Internalization

The reviewed literature demonstrates that Islamic value internalization contributes significantly to the development of several positive character traits among early childhood learners.

First, children develop strong religious character reflected in their willingness to perform religious practices, recite prayers, read the Qur'an, and demonstrate respect toward religious teachings. Religious character serves as the foundation upon which other moral values are built.

Second, children acquire discipline through structured routines and repeated participation in organized activities. Daily schedules, prayer times, and learning responsibilities help children understand the importance of punctuality and self-control.

Third, responsibility emerges through tasks requiring children to care for personal belongings, maintain cleanliness, and complete assigned duties. These experiences foster accountability and independence.

Fourth, politeness and respectful behavior develop through consistent

exposure to Islamic manners, including greeting others, speaking respectfully, and showing appreciation toward teachers and parents.

Fifth, empathy and social concern are strengthened through collaborative activities, charitable practices, and cooperative learning experiences. Children learn to appreciate the needs of others and develop a sense of social responsibility.

Finally, independence gradually develops as children become accustomed to performing religious and daily activities without constant supervision. Independence is particularly important because it prepares children for future educational and social challenges.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting Factors

Several factors contribute to the successful implementation of Islamic value internalization in Quranic Learning Centers.

First, a supportive religious environment provides continuous exposure to positive values and behaviors. Second, competent teachers who serve as role models significantly enhance the effectiveness of character education. Third, parental involvement strengthens the consistency of value reinforcement across educational and family settings. Fourth, engaging and developmentally appropriate learning methods increase children's participation and motivation. Finally, consistent implementation of religious practices and behavioral expectations promotes long-term character formation.

Inhibiting Factors

Despite its effectiveness, the internalization process also faces several challenges.

One major challenge is the increasing influence of digital media and technology. Children are frequently exposed to content that may contradict Islamic values and moral principles. Excessive screen time may also reduce opportunities for meaningful social interaction and character development.

Another challenge involves limited parental involvement. Inconsistent parenting practices and insufficient reinforcement of values at home may weaken educational outcomes. Differences between institutional expectations and family practices often create confusion for children regarding acceptable behavior.

Additional challenges include limited educational resources, varying levels of teacher competence, and children's differing developmental characteristics. These factors may affect the consistency and effectiveness of value internalization programs.

Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The findings demonstrate that Islamic value internalization in Quranic Learning Centers constitutes a comprehensive educational process integrating cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions. The success of this approach supports contemporary theories of holistic education, which emphasize the interconnectedness of knowledge, values, emotions, and behavior.

The study further confirms that character formation is most effective when educational experiences are authentic, consistent, and supported by meaningful social

relationships. The integration of role modeling, habituation, storytelling, environmental conditioning, and parental collaboration creates a comprehensive framework capable of addressing both moral and developmental needs of young children.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the growing literature on Islamic character education by highlighting the unique role of Quranic Learning Centers as non-formal educational institutions. Unlike many formal educational settings, these institutions provide intensive opportunities for value-based learning and practical religious engagement. Consequently, they offer a promising model for strengthening character education in contemporary Muslim societies.

The findings also suggest that future educational policies should recognize the importance of collaboration among families, communities, and religious educational institutions. Character development cannot be achieved through isolated interventions; rather, it requires a coordinated effort involving all stakeholders responsible for children's growth and development. In this regard, Quranic Learning Centers represent an effective educational alternative capable of nurturing morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially competent future generations.

CONCLUSION

The internalization of Islamic values plays a crucial role in shaping the character of early childhood learners by fostering moral awareness, spiritual commitment, and positive social behavior. This study demonstrates that Quranic Learning Centers (Rumah Qur'an) serve not only as institutions for Qur'anic literacy but also as important non-formal educational environments that contribute significantly to character development through the integration of Islamic teachings into children's daily experiences.

The findings reveal that the internalization of Islamic values is implemented through several interconnected strategies, namely exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), religious habituation, Islamic storytelling, moral advice (*mau'izah*), religious environmental conditioning, and collaboration between educational institutions and parents. Among these strategies, role modeling and habituation emerge as the most influential approaches because they correspond to the developmental characteristics of young children, who primarily learn through observation, imitation, repetition, and direct experience. The consistent implementation of these strategies enables children to internalize Islamic values and translate them into everyday behavior.

Furthermore, the study indicates that the internalization process contributes to the development of various positive character traits, including religiosity, discipline, responsibility, politeness, empathy, social awareness, and independence. These characteristics are essential for preparing children to face contemporary social challenges while maintaining strong moral and spiritual foundations. The findings also confirm that the effectiveness of Islamic character education is strongly influenced by the consistency of value reinforcement across educational institutions and family environments.

Despite its positive contributions, the process of Islamic value internalization faces several challenges, particularly those associated with digital media exposure, inconsistent parental involvement, and differences between educational and family practices. Therefore, strengthening collaboration among educators, parents, and communities is necessary to ensure sustainable character development and effective value transmission.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic character education by highlighting the unique role of Quranic Learning Centers as non-formal institutions that integrate religious learning with character formation. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers in designing effective character education programs that are responsive to contemporary educational challenges while remaining grounded in Islamic values. Future studies are encouraged to employ field-based research methods, including observations, interviews, and case studies, to obtain a deeper understanding of the implementation of Islamic value internalization strategies in various educational settings. Comparative studies involving formal schools, Islamic boarding schools, and Quranic Learning Centers may also provide broader perspectives on effective models of Islamic character education for early childhood learners.

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