



Integration of Religious Education and Morality in Early Childhood to Build a Foundation of Faith and Piety

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<p>Article Information: Received: September 2025 Revised: February 2026 Accepted: February 2026 Published: March 2026</p> <p>Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Religious and Moral Values, Faith and Piety, Character Education, Value Integration.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial stage in providing educational stimulation for children aged 0–6 years, particularly during the golden age, which plays a significant role in character formation. In the era of globalization and digitalization, children face various moral challenges, making the integration of religious and moral values an urgent necessity in ECE learning. Values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and tolerance serve as a fundamental basis for shaping children's character to become faithful and pious individuals. The internalization of religious and moral values requires collaboration among teachers, parents, and the social environment to ensure consistency and sustainability in children's education. This study aims to describe the integration of religious and moral values in early childhood education as an effort to form characters of faith and piety at TK Al Hidayah Sawentar 04. The research employed a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that religious and moral values are integrated through daily prayer routines, teachers' exemplary behavior, and the use of Islamic learning media such as illustrated stories and religious children's songs. This integration positively influences children's behavior, including politeness, honesty, and care for others. The study concludes that integrating religious values in ECE plays a strategic role in developing children's spiritual character and may serve as a reference for other ECE institutions.</p> <hr/> <p>How to Cite this Article: Saputri, D. W. R., Zainuddin, M., & Pramono, P. (2026). Integration of Religious Education and Morality in Early Childhood to Build a Foundation of Faith and Piety. <i>Jurnal Pendidikan Islam</i>, 16(1), 38–50. https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.3476</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 1 Paragraph 14, explains Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a development effort aimed at children from birth up to six years of age. The purpose of this developmental implementation is to provide encouragement or stimulation in the field of education, aiming to support the physical and mental development of children so that they are ready to proceed to the next stage of education.

Young children possess a unique capacity to absorb information, imitate, and form social relationships (Nurlina, Halima, Selman, H., & Amalia, 2024). This period is highly sensitive to the surrounding environment, where early experiences form the foundation for future development. Therefore, a holistic and child-centered approach is key to delivering

effective education. In this context, religious values serve as a strong foundation for shaping the character and morality of young children, as religious teachings emphasize noble ethics, compassion, and respect for others (Muhammad Faisal., 2024).

Integrating religious values into early childhood education has become an urgent need in today's modern era. Technological advancements and globalization bring new challenges, including external cultural influences that may not align with religious and moral values. This study is essential in demonstrating how the integration of religious and moral values can help shape faith and piety in children from an early age. This can serve as a preventive measure against the negative impacts of modernization, such as individualism, moral decline, and exposure to uneducational media.

The integration of religious and moral values in character education not only covers spiritual aspects but also includes the development of social attitudes, ethics, and morals (Latifah et al., 2024). The delivery of these values should not be theoretical or rigid. A fun and age-appropriate approach—such as storytelling, play, singing, and prayer—can be an effective medium to introduce these values. Through these activities, children can practice religious values in daily activities that match their cognitive and emotional development.

In the formation of early childhood character, interactions with the surrounding environment play a significant role. Families, schools, and communities become the primary agents influencing children's development at this stage. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to pay attention to their roles in providing a positive influence and empowering children to grow into noble and responsible individuals (Ramandhini et al., 2023). In the golden age period, children are considered to be pure and have limited abilities, making parenting and learning methods highly influential in shaping their development (Pramono et al., 2021). If teachers instill religious values from an early age, there is a greater chance for these characters to grow strong within the child.

(Azizah, 2024) stated that strategies to instill religious values for enhancing religious morality in early childhood are implemented through various methods, including teaching daily prayers, practicing worship, and outdoor learning activities such as learning about forgiveness and expressing gratitude. Through religious education, children adopt five attitudes: religiousness, moderation, intelligence, independence, and cooperation. Religiousness is reflected in communal prayers, reading the Qur'an, and performing Sunnah worship. Intelligence is shown through enthusiasm in learning and reciting. Independence supports discipline, and cooperation helps develop social skills.

A comprehensive understanding of early childhood development helps design appropriate learning approaches and ensures that religious and moral values are well integrated into every aspect of learning and daily interaction (Nurlina, Halima, Selman, H., & Amalia, 2024). A study by (Fauzi Fahmi & Rahmi Wardah Ningsih, 2020) explored various ECE curriculum models that accommodate child development, revealing that the Indonesian education system places more emphasis on religious values in the curriculum compared to Western education systems. In Indonesia, religious-based character education is a key element in ECE curricula. It emphasizes not only academic development but also moral and spiritual aspects. By incorporating religious values into formal ECE education, children are expected to grow not only in academic knowledge but also in strong morals and ethics.

The role of parents in integrating religious and moral values at home is equally essential (Salwiah & Asmuddin, 2022). Parents have a central role in guiding children to apply the values learned in school into daily activities. Collaboration between teachers and parents in implementing character education based on religious values is key to success in shaping well-mannered children.

Education is a process of internalizing knowledge in children, but what educators and parents must instill is not just academic knowledge. Character or moral issues are equally important because character education is a process aimed at shaping children's behavior, reflected in speech, attitude, and actions according to noble values, norms, and moral principles through guidance, teaching, and training. (Oktaviana et al., 2022) stated that educators have a crucial role in implementing moral education for early childhood through habituation methods.

Proper integration of moral education can potentially create a generation of Indonesian scholars who are full of integrity, honest, responsible, and highly disciplined. (Azizah, 2024) noted, the strategy for implementing religious values includes delivering prayer materials, worship practices, and outdoor learning like learning forgiveness and expressing gratitude.

In recent decades, globalization and digitalization have had a significant impact on children's social behavior, including in moral and ethical aspects. This rapid social change demands an education system that not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on building strong character. Lack of attention to ethical aspects in education can make children vulnerable to negative influences, such as hoaxes, consumptive behavior, and weak social awareness (Andrews, 2021). Therefore, early childhood education must be directed towards character building based on religious and moral values as the main foundation for their future lives. The solution that can be applied in overcoming this problem is to integrate religious and moral values into the early childhood education (ECE) curriculum in a systematic and sustainable manner.

Various studies show that the formation of religious character in early childhood is influenced by the role of the family, the school environment, and the learning methods used. Devina et al. (2024) emphasize that character education is greatly influenced by parental role modeling and the integration of moral and social values into the curriculum, which is reinforced through habit formation and direct experience. Thowilah's (2021) research also shows that religious character must be instilled from an early age through the integration of lessons, habit formation, spontaneity, and role modeling, and requires active support from families and communities. This is in line with the findings of Purwaningsih & Syamsudin (2022) that parental attention, school culture, and peers have a significant influence on children's religious character, with a simultaneous contribution of 58.3%, so that character building must be carried out through a tri-center education collaboration.

In addition, Trimuliana et al. (2019) found that in Character Model Early Childhood Education, the religious behavior of children aged 5–6 years is reflected in habits such as praying, greeting others, performing ablution, praying, giving alms, and memorizing short surahs as part of their daily learning. In the digital age, religious character education has become increasingly important, as explained by Nikmah (2023), that moral values derived

from the Qur'an can protect children from the negative influences of the times, and that habituation and role modeling remain effective strategies for instilling religious character in children.

Most of these studies focus on general moral aspects and have not specifically examined the integration of Islamic religious values through habituation methods, Islamic stories, and play activities appropriate to children's developmental stages. In addition, research on the influence of family-school collaboration on the successful internalization of religious values in early childhood in the Indonesian context is still limited. This study attempts to fill this gap by thoroughly examining strategies for integrating religious values into early childhood education through an approach that is enjoyable, contextual, and appropriate for children's development.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on: (1) the application of worship habituation methods, Islamic stories, and play activities; (2) parent-teacher collaboration in the internalization of values; and (3) the context of Indonesian early childhood education, which has a distinctive culture and high religiosity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how religious and moral values are integrated into early childhood education at TK Al Hidayah Sawentar 04. The study is designed as a single case study because it focuses on a specific situation considered relevant to the research objectives. The researcher plays a direct role as the main instrument, determining the research focus, selecting informants, conducting observations, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions from the study results. Data were collected through participant observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation. The researcher was directly involved in learning activities that incorporated religious and moral values and collected data from the principal, classroom teachers, and students using purposive sampling techniques. Documentation, including photos, organizational structures, activity reports, and learning documents, was used to complement the data obtained from observations and interviews.

The data analysis followed the stages of Miles and Huberman, which include data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The entire analysis process was carried out during and after the data collection. The validity of the data was ensured through method triangulation and source triangulation, by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation, and matching them with information from various informants. This technique ensures that the research results accurately reflect the implementation and impact of integrating religious and moral values in learning to shape the faith and piety of children at TK Al Hidayah Sawentar 04.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the integration of religious and moral values at Al Hidayah Sawentar 04 Kindergarten is carried out through daily habits, teacher role modeling, and the use of learning media that is appropriate for the children's stage of development. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation show that

the practice of value integration is carried out systematically and is directly connected to children's learning activities and social interactions. Learning activities always begin with communal prayer, greetings, and personal hygiene routines such as hand washing. These habits are not merely formal rituals, but are important means of instilling values of discipline, gratitude, and togetherness. These findings are in line with Hadi's (2019) opinion, which emphasizes that moral education in early childhood must be provided through direct experience and consistent repetition. This is reinforced by Nurcholish Madjid's (2000) view that religious character education is not enough to be understood cognitively but must be manifested in real and continuous daily actions.

The integration of religious values is also evident in children's social activities, such as sharing, cooperating, asking permission, and saying thank you. Teachers facilitate this process by providing direct examples and gentle but firm guidance. When conflicts arise between children, teachers do not immediately resolve them, but encourage them to discuss, apologize to each other, and reconcile. With this approach, children learn to take responsibility for their behavior and understand moral values more deeply. To reinforce the understanding of values, teachers use various media such as Islamic storybooks, posters of noble character, short educational videos, and picture cards. These media are effective because they are in line with the cognitive development characteristics of early childhood, which requires visuals and concrete narratives. Islamic stories are also read at the end of each learning session to provide moral understanding through role models and storylines that are interesting for children.

An interview with the homeroom teacher, Mrs. U.N., revealed that religious habits are consistently practiced through morning prayers, prayers before and after meals, short recitations, and the instilling of values through Islamic stories. She said that "children are most easily influenced by example, so it is our job to set an example before asking them to do it," which shows the importance of role modeling. She emphasized that many children began to show positive changes after following these routines, especially in terms of patience, manners, and caring for friends. The principal, Mrs. S.U., added that the integration of religious values is reinforced through school culture, such as putting up posters on morals, providing an Islamic reading corner, and carrying out religious activities such as mini tahlil and anjangsana. She emphasized that religious values must be practiced, not just taught, and that the role of parents is very important to ensure continuity of practice at home. She said that teachers are the main role models, but parents need to support the values built at school so that children have a consistent environment.

Observations show that teachers always integrate religious values when children are playing. When children fight over toys, teachers remind them to take turns while modeling the use of positive phrases such as "can I borrow it after you're done?" or "thank you for waiting." Teachers give praise as a form of appreciation when children exhibit good behavior such as greeting others, helping friends, or tidying up toys after playing. This appreciation serves as positive reinforcement that encourages children to continue repeating good behavior. The classroom has an Islamic reading corner that attracts children's interest. Observations show that some children independently take storybooks and ask teachers to read them, indicating that interest in religious media is beginning to develop naturally thanks

to a supportive environment. In addition, worship practices such as the dhuha prayer are carried out regularly. The children are guided from lining up, performing wudu, to following the prayer movements according to their abilities. This activity is not only an introduction to worship, but also trains focus, discipline, and patience.

The integration of religious values at Al Hidayah Kindergarten is carried out through three approaches: daily habits, role modeling, and the use of learning media. Daily habits are carried out through prayer, greetings, gratitude, the practice of dhuha prayer, and the habit of being polite in interactions. Role modeling is evident when teachers show patience, greet others, smile, and even apologize to children when necessary. Role modeling is the most influential element in the process of internalizing values because children learn primarily by imitating the behavior of the adults around them. Learning media and methods also play a major role, with the use of stories, educational videos, role-playing games, and songs with moral values that are appropriate for early childhood characteristics. These three approaches complement each other to create a holistic learning environment oriented towards the formation of religious character.

The positive impact of integrating religious values is clearly evident in the children's behavior. Children are becoming more accustomed to saying greetings, asking for permission, waiting their turn, and respecting their friends. Some children also demonstrate an understanding of simple values such as patience, gratitude, and sharing. Although there are still children who need more intensive guidance, in general their development shows a positive direction. Teachers and principals also acknowledge that the classroom atmosphere has become more conducive, the level of conflict has decreased, and children are easier to guide. A school environment full of positive values provides a sense of security and comfort so that children are better prepared to participate in learning activities.

The results of this study indicate that the integration of religious and moral values at Al Hidayah Sawentar 04 Kindergarten is effectively implemented through habituation, role modeling, and learning media. This success is supported by the consistency of teachers, a strong school culture, and close cooperation between the school and parents. The process of internalizing values occurs naturally because it is integrated into all learning activities and social interactions. These findings make an important contribution to the development of a religious value-based learning model in early childhood education institutions in Indonesia and can serve as a reference for good practices for other schools that want to strengthen character education from an early age. If necessary, I can create a more concise, more academic version, or one that is tailored to a specific journal template. The following is documentation of the activities:

Character education in early childhood is a crucial foundation for their personal and moral development throughout their lives. At Al Hidayah Sawentar 04 Blitar Kindergarten, the integration of religious and moral values is not taught as a separate subject, but is instilled in every aspect of the children's learning and daily lives. This reflects a holistic approach, where values such as honesty, gratitude, empathy, and discipline are embodied through real activities such as communal prayer, moral stories, games, and social interaction. These findings support the idea of Devina et al. (2024) that character education is effective when moral and spiritual values are embedded in children's daily curriculum.



Figure 1. Learning Activities and Character Strengthening in the Classroom



Figure 2. Anjangsana and Mini Tahlil Activities

The use of educational media plays a significant role in facilitating the internalization of values in early childhood. In the classroom, teaching aids such as miniature mosques, prayer boards, Arabic letters, and Islamic videos on LCD screens visualize abstract religious concepts into concrete forms that children can observe, touch, and imitate. These visual-audio media allow children to combine cognitive, sensory, and emotional aspects in moral and spiritual learning (Saputra et al., 2023). Learning media help bridge the world of children and religious teachings to make them easier to understand and accept.

Thematic and play-based learning approaches are also important strategies for instilling moral values without being forceful. For example, at the beginning of the day, teachers use Islamic songs, short stories about moral tales, and question and answer sessions to convey messages of honesty, helpfulness, and gratitude in a fun way. This strategy makes religious learning feel like part of play activities, rather than rigid lessons, so that children tend to be more easily involved and absorb values. This is in line with the findings of Samsinar et al. (2022) that moral learning is effective when packaged in creative and contextual activities.



Figure 3. Observation Activities During Dhuha Prayer Practice

Core activities such as congregational dhuha prayers, memorization of short surahs, daily prayers, and reading hadiths provide children with direct spiritual experiences. Through practical application, children learn that religious and moral values are not just theories, but part of everyday life that must be lived. The routine repetition of these spiritual activities forms religious habits and discipline, in accordance with the principle of habituating values through real experiences. In addition, these collective activities instill a sense of personal and social responsibility as well as spiritual togetherness among children.

The importance of reflection after ritual activities or memorization is also a fundamental aspect of internalizing values. Teachers routinely engage children in dialogue after worship or reading, for example by asking, “How do you feel after praying?” or “What did you learn from that hadith?” These simple discussions allow children to interpret teachings emotionally and cognitively, rather than merely reciting texts. This reflective process helps children develop moral awareness and spiritual consistency in their daily lives.

The role of teachers as role models and moral facilitators is very significant in this process. Teachers not only give verbal instructions, but also demonstrate religious and moral behavior in their daily lives, such as being patient, honest, fair, and empathetic towards children. These real-life behavioral models provide concrete examples that children can emulate, in line with social learning theory that children learn most effectively through observation and imitation. Thus, the internalization of values becomes more authentic and ingrained because the values are embodied in the teacher's daily actions.

The scaffolding strategy used by teachers in guiding worship practices and memorization also demonstrates an understanding of children's developmental zones. In the early stages, teachers accompany children intensively, helping them with movements, readings, or understanding the meaning of prayers, then gradually giving them the freedom to practice independently. This gradual process is in line with Vygotsky's idea that moral learning must be adapted to children's abilities so that the internalization of values grows naturally and is not forced. Through this approach, children develop at their own pace, while still receiving the support they need (Elan & Fathy, 2025).

The physical and cultural environment of the school supports the successful integration of values in a fundamental way. The principal designs a schedule and supervises

the instillation of values, providing facilities such as a prayer room, an Islamic reading corner, educational media, and open spaces for social interaction. These facilities create a “moral ecosystem” in which religious and moral values become an integral part of the children's daily environment. This type of school infrastructure and culture allows children to experience values consistently in a real and comprehensive context (Abbas & Astoko, 2024).

Collaboration between schools and parents is an important pillar so that the values instilled at school can be reinforced at home. Parents are involved in regular meetings, online communication, and prayer or memorization guidance so that children are accustomed to continuing the habit in the family environment. Consistency between the school and home environments makes the internalization of values more solid and sustainable, as children see that these values apply in various aspects of their lives (Marlina et al., 2025). This collaborative model supports the principle of whole child education as stated by Devina et al. (2024), that character education must involve the entire social ecosystem of children.

Religious character education through this method has great potential to shape long-term personality. Children who grow up with habits of prayer, discipline, empathy, spiritual togetherness, and moral reflection from an early age will have a strong moral foundation when they enter the next stage of development. Values such as honesty, responsibility, solidarity, and piety become part of their identity, not just school habits (Apriliani et al., 2020). Character education in early childhood education, such as at Al Hidayah Kindergarten, not only shapes intellectual intelligence but also character, spirituality, and strong social awareness.

However, the implementation of this value integration also presents challenges. The variation in the characters and abilities of early childhood means that not all children respond to the same methods quickly; some children are quick to memorize and imitate, while others need a slower pace and a more individualized approach. If teachers are not sensitive to these differences, learning can feel forced or boring for some children. Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider the diversity of children's abilities and learning styles so that the habit of values remains inclusive and effective.

Another challenge arises in the family environment when parents are inconsistent in continuing to instill values at home (Sukriyah et al., 2024). If prayer, memorization, or moral practices only occur at school, then the expected internalization may cease when children are outside the school environment. This emphasizes the importance of active communication and collaboration between schools and parents so that values become part of the family culture. Without the support of the home environment, character education at school can lose its long-term impact.

In addition, it is necessary to be aware if the habits taught are only carried out routinely without clear meaning. Children may imitate behavior without really understanding the moral values or religious teachings that are being instilled. To prevent this, teachers need to involve children in discussions, reflections, and conversations about the meaning of each activity. In this way, children will not only practice habits, but also understand and internalize the values being taught (Am et al., 2023; Hanum & Maryani, 2023).

From a moral and religious theory perspective, the value integration model at Al Hidayah Kindergarten is consistent with the modern character education approach. Moral

and spiritual values are constructed through direct experience, habituation, modeling, scaffolding, and reflection, not just through lectures or memorization of texts. This approach allows the internalization of values to become part of children's spiritual and moral identity. Thus, character education does not stop at the academic aspect but includes the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development of children (Biantoro & Rahmatullah, 2025).

In practical terms, this model provides recommendations for other early childhood education institutions. Schools need to design an integrated values curriculum, provide educational media, involve teachers as role models, establish close collaboration with parents, and create a supportive school environment. With such implementation, character education in early childhood can become the foundation for a future generation that is not only intelligent but also virtuous, religious, and socially conscious. Religious moral character education in this way can be the answer to educational needs in the modern era, which often faces moral and spiritual crises (Fahmi & Ningsih, 2021).

The success of integrating values at Al Hidayah Kindergarten shows that religious and moral values are not limited to religious content, but are part of a lifestyle and identity from an early age. Children learn that living with values is a real process through prayer, actions, worship, social interaction, and reflection so that values become an integral part of their lives. Thus, religious moral character education in early childhood education not only shapes a generation that is obedient in worship, but also humans who are characterful, empathetic, responsible, and adaptive to the changing times. This model shows that character and religious education remain relevant and can be carried out creatively, contextually, and holistically (Khofifah & Mufarochah, 2022).

In the future, further research can explore how the internalization of values instilled in PAUD has a long-term effect on children's social behavior, academic achievement, and spiritual development when they enter elementary school or the next level. Longitudinal evaluations will help determine the sustainability of character, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors. The findings from Al Hidayah Kindergarten can serve as a basis for comparative research in various regions, so that religious moral character education models can be adapted to the local cultural context. Thus, efforts to build a generation with noble character in Indonesia can be carried out systematically, contextually, and sustainably.

Considering the challenges and the need for adaptation according to the character of children and their environment, the integration of religious and moral values of this kind still has great potential to form a solid character foundation. Religious moral character education is not merely idealism, but a practical reality that can be implemented from an early age with significant results. Al Hidayah Sawentar 04 Blitar Kindergarten shows that with consistency, creativity, collaboration, and commitment, religious and moral values can be instilled in every aspect of children's activities, shaping individuals who are not only intelligent, but also faithful, pious, have noble character, and are ready to face the challenges of the times with a strong moral foundation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of religious and moral values in early childhood education at Al Hidayah Sawentar 04 Kindergarten is carried out through a

structured and comprehensive approach, including daily habituation, teacher exemplary, and the use of relevant learning media. This practice succeeds in creating a learning environment that supports the formation of children's character of faith and piety from an early age. The research findings show that the success of this value integration is strongly influenced by the active role of teachers, a religious school culture, and a learning approach that is integrated into children's daily activities. Values such as honesty, responsibility, helping, and spiritual attitudes can be instilled through simple yet effective ways.

Theoretically, this finding supports the view of educational experts that the internalization of religious values in early childhood is most effectively done through direct experience and exemplary. Practically, the integration model applied by Al Hidayah Kindergarten can be used as a reference for other ECE units in developing character education based on religious and moral values. Thus, early childhood education not only plays a role in cognitive and motor development, but also becomes the main foundation in the formation of a strong religious character, which will be an important provision in the child's future life.

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