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Religious and Moral Values Learning Strategies in Early Childhood from an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRAK

Pendidikan nilai agama dan moral (NAM) pada anak usia dini merupakan komponen mendasar dalam membentuk karakter Islami dan perkembangan anak secara holistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tujuan, kurikulum, metode, media, dan evaluasi pembelajaran RMV dalam perspektif Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, yang melibatkan pengumpulan sistematis, klasifikasi, dan analisis teks-teks Islam klasik, dokumen kurikulum nasional, dan artikel jurnal internasional. Data dikumpulkan dari database yang terindeks (Scopus, DOAJ, Google Scholar) dengan menggunakan kata kunci yang berkaitan dengan PAUD Islam dan pengembangan akhlak, sedangkan analisis dilakukan melalui analisis konten yang berfokus pada kategorisasi dan interpretasi tematik. Sumber yang diteliti berasal dari berbagai konteks pendidikan, termasuk PAUD di Indonesia dan perspektif internasional yang lebih luas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran RMV menekankan pada internalisasi tauhid, amalan ibadah, akhlak mulia, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Implementasi kurikulum memerlukan integrasi antara standar nasional PAUD dan nilai-nilai Islam, sedangkan metode pembelajaran yang efektif meliputi pembiasaan, keteladanan, bercerita, interaksi dialogis, dan pendekatan bermain. Media yang tepat meliputi alat visual, audio, audiovisual, dan digital yang dirancang sesuai dengan tahap perkembangan anak usia dini. Evaluasi mengutamakan observasi terhadap sikap dan perilaku anak sehari-hari, didukung dengan portofolio dan kolaborasi rumah-sekolah. Temuan tersebut memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik dan lembaga PAUD.

ABSTRACT

Religious and moral values (RMV) education in early childhood is a fundamental component in shaping Islamic character and holistic child development. This study aims to analyze the objectives, curriculum, methods, media, and evaluation of RMV learning from an Islamic perspective. The research employed a qualitative library research method, involving systematic collection, classification, and analysis of classical Islamic texts, national curriculum documents, and international journal articles. Data were collected from indexed databases (Scopus, DOAJ, Google Scholar) using keywords related to Islamic early childhood education and moral development, while analysis was conducted through content analysis focusing on thematic categorization and interpretation. Sources examined originate from various educational contexts, including Indonesian early childhood education settings and broader international perspectives. The results of the study show that RMV learning emphasizes the internalization of monotheism, worship practices, noble character, and social responsibility. Curriculum implementation requires integration between national PAUD standards and Islamic values, while effective learning methods include habituation, role modeling, storytelling, dialogical interaction, and play-based approaches. Appropriate media include visual, audio, audiovisual, and digital tools designed to suit the developmental stage of early childhood. Evaluation prioritizes observation of children's daily attitudes and behaviors, supported by portfolios and home–school collaboration. The findings provide practical implications for educators and PAUD institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a very important phase in individual development, because during this period children experience very rapid and significant growth in various aspects, including cognitive, affective, social, moral, and spiritual (Oskar et al., 2025). Developmental experts call the age of 0–6 years the *golden age*, namely the golden period where the stimulation provided will greatly influence the child's long-term development (Suryana et al., 2022).

In the Islamic context, early childhood education receives significant attention. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *"Every child is born in a state of fitrah (natural disposition), then it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian"* (al-Bukhārī, 2016; Muslim, 2016). This hadith emphasizes that children possess pure innate potential, and parental and environmental education significantly determines the direction of their development. Therefore, religious and moral values (RVM) education is a crucial foundation for shaping an Islamic identity from an early age (Jannah et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2024).

Religious and moral values education plays a central role in Islamic education, as it not only guides children in cognitive aspects but also internalizes the values of monotheism, morality, and worship in their daily lives (Ismail et al., 2025; Satra et al., 2025). This aligns with the goal of Islamic education, which is to develop individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble character (Jannah et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2024). Therefore, religious and moral values learning for early childhood should not be viewed simply as formal instruction, but rather as a continuous process of habituation and character building (Alfani et al., 2025).

Previous studies have shown that learning religious and moral values significantly influences children's character development (Alfani et al., 2025). Found that practicing simple religious practices and developing morals through daily activities can improve children's empathy, discipline, and social attitudes (Suryana et al., 2022). Furthermore, international research by Noddings emphasized the importance of *care-based moral education* as a more humanistic alternative to character education (Nodding, 2002).

In comparison, Islamic education places greater emphasis on integrating spiritual, moral, and social aspects. Ulwan, in his work *Tarbiyatul Aulad fil Islam*, asserts that children's education must begin with instilling the values of monotheism, cultivating worship, teaching noble morals, and cultivating social responsibility (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997). Thus, Islamic perspective RVM education offers a unique contribution that differs from Western educational models by integrating the transcendental aspect (relationship with God) with the horizontal aspect (relationship with others) (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997).

Despite its importance, the implementation of early childhood Islamic education in Indonesia faces several challenges. First, the limited competence of early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini/PAUD) teachers in integrating Islamic values with the national curriculum (Hidayat, 2020). Second, the use of teaching methods that tend to be cognitive and do not emphasize the instilling of Islamic behavior (Hasanah, 2018). Third, the influence of the social environment and digital media, which are often inconsistent with Islamic moral values (Ningtyaz et al., 2025).

In the era of globalization, children are increasingly exposed to secular values that can conflict with religious values. Therefore, religious and moral values education must be designed to be adaptive, contextual, and enjoyable to compete with external influences while remaining relevant to children's development. Studies on religious and moral values education in early childhood cannot be separated from theories of moral development developed in the Western tradition. Jean Piaget (1932), for example, proposed that children's moral development proceeds through two stages: *heteronomous morality* (morality influenced by external rules) and *autonomous morality* (morality based on self-awareness). In the early stages, children tend to

obey rules imposed by external authorities, such as teachers or parents (Juliana & Sitorus, 2025). As cognitive development progresses, children begin to understand that rules are negotiable and based on social agreements.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) later expanded Piaget's theory with a six-stage model of moral development, grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Early childhood is in the pre-conventional stage, where moral judgment is based more on consequences (punishment or reward) than on universal moral principles. From this perspective, moral education in early childhood is understood as a gradual process toward a more complex moral level (Garrigan et al., 2018).

Lev Vygotsky (1978) added that children's moral and social development is greatly influenced by social interaction and language. The concept of *the zone of proximal development (ZPD)* suggests that children need guidance from adults or more skilled peers to internalize social and moral values (Kolly-Shamne, 2022). However, these Western theories have limitations when applied directly to early childhood education from an Islamic perspective. First, they tend to emphasize cognitive and social aspects, while underemphasizing spiritual aspects. Second, moral orientation in the Western perspective is often relativistic, relying on social conventions, while in Islam, morality is derived from revelation (the Qur'an and Sunnah).

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of moral education is rooted in human nature. The Quran states that every human being is created with the potential to know the truth (QS. Al-Rum: 30). The Prophet's Hadith also emphasizes that every child is born in a state of *fitrah*. This concept demonstrates that moral education in Islam is not simply the formation of behavior, but rather the process of developing innate human potential toward moral perfection (al-Ghazali, 2012; al-Nahlawi, 2010; 'Ulwan, 1997).

Al-Attas (1991) emphasized that the main goal of Islamic education is the cultivation of *adab*, namely the recognition and recognition of the correct position of Allah, humans and the universe (Al-Attas, 1999; Jannah et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2024). Thus, morals in Islam are not a product of social consensus, but a reflection of obedience to Allah SWT. Ulwan in *Tarbiyatul Aulad fil Islam* explains that children's education must be directed at forming an Islamic personality which includes the dimensions of faith, worship, morals and social (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997).

In the context of Indonesian education policy, religious and moral values education is positioned as a core component of the Early Childhood Education curriculum. Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 concerning National Early Childhood Education Standards explicitly mandates that the development of religious and moral values is one of the six essential domains of early childhood development. This regulation aligns with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which underscores that national education must be rooted in religious values, national culture, and the demands of modernization. These policies demonstrate that the Indonesian curriculum is designed not only to transfer knowledge but also to build identity, spirituality, and character from early childhood.

In practice, however, the implementation of religious and moral values education varies significantly across PAUD institutions. Some schools with strong religious foundations have successfully integrated Islamic values into daily activities, while others still rely on conventional academic-oriented approaches. Research shows that many early childhood education teachers continue to emphasize reading, writing, and arithmetic (calistung), which leads to a limited focus on the holistic development intended by policy regulations (Ismail & Wardi, 2025; Oskar et al., 2025; Suryana et al., 2022). Additionally, gaps in teachers' pedagogical competence, particularly in integrating RVM with child-centered learning—remain a persistent challenge.

Education policy is also influenced by the global agenda, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The fourth goal (SDG 4) emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and

quality education and promotes lifelong learning. Within this framework, religious and moral education in Indonesia must be able to address the challenges of globalization and digitalization while maintaining Islamic identity and values (Luthfi et al., 2025).

Despite these challenges, several studies provide proof of success concerning the implementation of Moral and religious values education in Indonesian early childhood settings. For instance: Islamic-based early childhood education institutions in Banjarmasin have demonstrated improved children's moral behavior through integrated religious and moral values curriculum practices, such as daily dhuha prayer routines, shared breakfast programs, and environmental care practices (Ningtyaz et al., 2025), Value-based storytelling programs in Aceh showed significant improvement in children's honesty, empathy, and discipline after consistent use of Qur'anic stories and character-based narratives (Sakila & Sutrisno, 2023), and Project-based moral activities, such as charity boxes, class cleanliness projects, and cooperative play—implemented in several early childhood education institutions in Java have been shown to strengthen children's social responsibility and moral awareness (Oktari et al., 2025).

These successful examples prove that when Islamic values are embedded authentically into children's daily learning experiences, religious and moral values education becomes more meaningful and effective.

These strategies demonstrate that Indonesia has a strong policy foundation for religious and moral values education, and successful implementations in various regions show its practical feasibility. Strengthening teacher capacity, integrating values into daily activities, and building collaboration with families are key to ensuring that moral and religious education is effectively realized according to Islamic principles and national educational goals.

Globalization has brought about significant changes in children's social interaction patterns. The presence of digital media and internet access exposes young children to diverse values, including those that conflict with Islamic norms. That children who use the internet are at high risk of being exposed to age-inappropriate content. This situation emphasizes the importance of adaptive religious and moral values education, which not only teaches values dogmatically but also trains children to filter information and develop a strong moral awareness (Saepudin, 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, religious and moral values education is also relevant for building cultural resilience. As emphasized in Surah *Luqman*, verses 13–19, moral education is not only personal but also social, emphasizing aspects of monotheism, worship, morals, and social responsibility. Thus, religious and moral values education serves as a moral bulwark that prepares children to face global challenges while maintaining their Islamic identity (Saepudin, 2022).

Although the literature on religious and moral values education in early childhood is extensive, several important research gaps remain. First, most existing studies are normative or conceptual in nature, focusing on principles, methods, or general descriptions of practice, while very few employ empirical designs—such as quasi-experiments or longitudinal studies—to measure the actual effectiveness of religious and moral values strategies in Indonesian early childhood education settings. Second, research examining the long-term impact of early religious and moral values interventions on children's moral and spiritual development into primary school or early adolescence is still limited. Third, there is a lack of comparative studies that evaluate different integration models, such as curriculum-based integration, daily routines, and family-based interventions, especially when combined with contextual variables such as socio-economic background, parental religiosity, or digital media exposure.

These gaps provide opportunities for future studies to offer stronger contributions. Future research could: (a) conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies measuring behavioral and spiritual changes before and after religious and moral values interventions; (b) implement longitudinal research to assess the continuity of value internalization across developmental

stages; (c) develop and empirically test integrative models that combine teacher training, parental engagement, and Islamic digital media; and (d) employ more robust evaluation tools, combining structured observations, portfolios, and simple psychometric measures to capture affective and spiritual dimensions beyond observable behavior. Such efforts will enrich the empirical foundation and strengthen policy recommendations for early childhood Islamic education in Indonesia.

The goal of examining the relevance of religious and moral values education in the era of globalization is to develop an integrated conceptual framework that connects Islamic normative sources (Qur'an and Sunnah), classical Islamic educational theories (al-Ghazali, al-Attas, Ulwan), Western theories of moral development (Piaget, Kohlberg, Vygotsky, Bandura), and contemporary child-centered pedagogical practices. The study aims to articulate how transcendental dimensions (faith, *adab*, worship) and social-ethical dimensions (empathy, cooperation, responsibility) can be harmonized into a coherent pedagogical model for early childhood learning.

The theoretical benefits of this analysis include: Expanding moral education theory by incorporating spiritual constructs as operational components within early childhood development frameworks; Providing an integrative pedagogical model that combines social scaffolding (Vygotsky), observational learning (Bandura), and Islamic concepts of modeling and habituation (*uswah hasanah* and *ta'dib*); Offering a richer evaluation framework that integrates affective, behavioral, and spiritual indicators, enabling a more comprehensive assessment of children's moral development; Establishing a theoretical basis for future empirical research—especially quantitative and mixed-methods designs—to test the effectiveness of religious and moral values interventions in varied cultural and school contexts.

Through these contributions, the study not only supports the strengthening of Islamic early childhood education but also enhances its relevance within global discussions on moral and character education.

2. METHOD

This article uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the topic of early childhood religious and moral values learning from an Islamic perspective is more appropriately studied through conceptual, normative, and academic discourse analysis than field research. Literature studies allow researchers to collect, organize, and analyze various primary and secondary sources relevant to the research focus (Snyder, 2019). The data sources used are divided into three categories: (1) Primary sources, in the form of the Al-Qur'an, hadith, and works of classical scholars discussing children's education, such as *Ihya' Ulumuddin* by al-Ghazali, *Tarbiyatul Aulad fil Islam* by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, the contemporary work of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas regarding the concept of Islamic education, and Ushul al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah wa Asalibuha fi al-Bait wa al-Madrasah wa al-Mujtama' by Abdur Rahman al-Nalawi; (2) Secondary sources**,** in the form of academic books, accredited national journal articles, and Scopus-indexed international journal articles that discuss moral education, child development, and the integration of Islamic values in education; and (3) Policy documents**,** in the form of Indonesian government regulations regarding early childhood education, such as Permendikbud Number 137 of 2014 concerning National PAUD Standards, as well as the 2013 early childhood education Curriculum. These sources were selected to provide a rich conceptual framework, while being relevant to the Indonesian context and developments in global educational theory (Oktari et al., 2025).

Table 1. Sources for Conceptual Framework

References/documents	Author	Title
Book	Al-Ghazali	Ihya' Ulum al-Din
Book	Abdullah Nasih Ulwan	*Tarbiyatul Aulad fil Islam*
Book	Naquib al-Attas	the concept of Islamic education
Book	Abd al-Rahman al-Nahlawy	Ushul al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah wa Asalibuha fi al-Bait wa al-Madrasah wa al-Mujtama'
Journal	Ningtyaz, dkk	Islamic Values Integration in Early Childhood Education: A Multi-Site Case Study of Curriculum Practices in Banjarmasin, Indonesia
Journal	Novienda	The Development of Religious and Moral Values through Playing
Journal	Oktari, dkk	Analysis of the Success in Instilling Religious and Moral Values in Early Childhood. *Al Tahdzib: Jurnal Pendidikan*
Journal	Oskar, dkk	*Early Childhood Development (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social, Moral and Religious) and Its Implications toward Early Childhood Education*
Journal	Poku	The Influence Of Audio-Visual Learning Media On Early Childhood Language Development
Journal	Putri & Fiqiyah	Development of Child's Islamic Religious Aspects Through The Method of Training Education. *TATHO*
Journal	Sakila & Sutrisno	Using The Story Of The Qur'an In Early Children's Education: A Study Of The Formation Of Children's Morals
Journal	Suryana, dkk	Early Childhood Development (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social, Moral, and Religious Tasks) Implications For Education
Regulation	Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI	Permendikbud Number 137 of 2014 concerning National PAUD Standards

Data analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach. Snyder (2019) explains that content analysis allows researchers to interpret textual data systematically, objectively, and contextually (Snyder, 2019). The analysis process in this study includes: (1) Initial coding**:** grouping information based on main themes (objectives, curriculum, methods, media,

evaluation). (2) Categorization: comparing concepts from classical Islamic literature, contemporary literature, and Western theories regarding moral education; (3) Interpretation: interpreting the suitability, differences, and integration between Islamic perspectives and modern educational theories; and (4) Synthesis**:** compiling the analysis results into a conceptual framework for religious and moral values learning from an Islamic perspective.

To ensure validity, this study employed source triangulation, comparing data from classical Islamic literature, contemporary literature, and national policies. Reliability was maintained through systematic recording of the entire literature search and data analysis process (Snyder, 2019).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Learning Objectives of Religious and Moral Values for Early Childhood

The goal of teaching religious and moral values to early childhood from an Islamic perspective is rooted in the primary mission of Islamic education: to develop individuals who are devout, have noble morals, and are responsible toward themselves, society, and God (al-Ghazali, 2012; al-Nahlawi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1999; ’Ulwan, 1997). This goal emphasizes the spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of children, so that religious and moral values is understood not merely as a set of rules but as the internalization of values that shape Islamic character from an early age.

3.1.1. Normative Basis for RVM Objectives

The Quran explicitly emphasizes the importance of values education from an early age. Surah *Luqman* (verses 13–19) describes how *Luqman* advises his son by instilling monotheism, morality, social responsibility, and a sense of worship (al-Jamal, 2018; Khatib al-Ray, 1981). These verses emphasize that the goal of religious and moral values is to build a sense of monotheism as a foundation for morality. The hadith of the Prophet SAW also strengthens the importance of moral education in children. The Prophet said: *"Every child is born in a state of fitrah, so it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian or Magian"* (HR. Bukhari-Muslim). This hadith shows that the aim of moral education is to maintain children's nature so that they develop according to Islamic guidance.

3.1.2. Perspectives of Classical and Contemporary Scholars

Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* emphasized that the goal of educating children is to develop noble morals as a path to happiness in this world and the hereafter. According to him, children are a trust from Allah who must be guided so they do not deviate from their natural disposition (al-Ghazali, 2012). Ulwan develops this idea more practically. He mentioned six main goals of children's education in Islam: faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, social education and sexual education. Of these six goals, the aspects of faith and morals occupy the most important position (’Ulwan, 1997). Syed Naquib al-Attas emphasized the concept of *adab* as the main goal of Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1999). Thus, the aim of religious and moral values in early childhood is to build children's awareness of their position in relation to God, fellow humans and nature.

3.1.3. Relevance to Child Development Theory

From a developmental psychology perspective, the goals of religious and moral values can be aligned with the moral stages proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg. In the pre-conventional stage, children understand morality through consequences (Garrigan et al., 2018; Juliana & Sitorus, 2025). This aligns with Islamic educational practices, which utilize a mild *reward* and *punishment approach* as a learning tool (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; ’Ulwan, 1997). However, Islam adds a spiritual dimension, instilling the awareness that every behavior is monitored by God (QS. *Al-Mujadilah*: 7). Thus, the goal of religious and moral values in Islam is more comprehensive than Western theory, because it includes transcendental aspects, not just social rationality.

3.1.4. Objectives of religious and moral values in the Context of Indonesian Early Childhood Education

In Indonesian education policy, the RVM goal for early childhood education is reflected in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014, which stipulates that early childhood is expected to demonstrate behavior in accordance with religious and moral values, such as knowing God, praying, being polite, honest, and disciplined. This goal aligns with the 2013 early childhood education curriculum, which emphasizes the formation of spiritual attitudes *and* social attitudes *as* the foundation of children's character (Ningtyaz et al., 2025; Oktari et al., 2025). However, from an Islamic perspective, this goal must be deepened with a monotheistic orientation. This means that moral behavior is not merely a social instrument, but a manifestation of devotion to God. For example, children are taught not only to be honest because it is socially desirable, but also because honesty is a commandment of God and a sign of faith.

3.1.5. The Purpose of religious and moral values as a Holistic Process

The goals of religious and moral values cannot be reduced solely to cognitive or behavioral aspects. Islamic education emphasizes the unity of the heart (*qalb*), mind, and body (al-Ghazali, 2012; al-Nahlawi, 2010; 'Ulwan, 1997). Therefore, religious and moral values learning aims to: (1) Building spiritual awareness: knowing Allah as the creator, understanding the concept of worship, and having a sense of love for the Prophet Muhammad SAW; (2) Developing noble morals: training honest, polite, disciplined, patient and caring behavior from an early age; (3) Improving emotional and social intelligence**:** training empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in social interactions; (4) Directing natural potential: channeling children's innate potential so that they do not deviate from the path of truth (Oktari et al., 2025; Suryana et al., 2022).

3.2. Curriculum for Learning Religious and Moral Values for Early Childhood

The curriculum is a crucial component of education, serving as a systematic guideline for achieving learning objectives. In the context of early childhood education, the curriculum plays a strategic role in ensuring that religious and moral values are instilled from an early age. An effective curriculum focuses not only on academic achievement but also emphasizes the development of character, spirituality, and noble morals in accordance with human nature (Mahler et al., 2024).

3.2.1. Foundation of the religious and moral values Curriculum in Islam

In Islam, the educational curriculum is based on the Quran and Sunnah. These two primary sources emphasize the importance of instilling the values of faith, worship, and morality from an early age (al-Ghazali, 2012; al-Nahlawi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1999; 'Ulwan, 1997). Surah An-Nahl: 78 states that humans are born without knowledge, but are given hearing, sight, and a heart to be grateful. This verse suggests that early education aims to optimize a child's potential so that they develop according to their natural instincts (al-Jamal, 2018; Khatib al-Ray, 1981). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad's hadith, which states that children are a trust, demonstrates that the educational curriculum must be geared toward developing an Islamic personality (al-Ghazali, 2012; al-Nahlawi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1999; 'Ulwan, 1997). Therefore, the Islamic-based religious and moral values curriculum is not merely a technical instrument, but part of the religious responsibility to safeguard and guide children's natural disposition.

3.2.2. Principles of the religious and moral values Curriculum

According to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, the main principles of the Islamic children's education curriculum include the dimensions of faith, worship, morals and social dimensions ('Ulwan, 1997). These principles can be formulated as follows: (1) Based on monotheism: all materials and activities are directed at strengthening the awareness that Allah is the center of life; (2) Holistic-integrative: includes cognitive, affective, spiritual and psychomotor aspects of

children; (3) Gradual and continuous: in accordance with the developmental stages of early childhood, from simple introduction to more complex understanding; (4) Contextual: religious and moral values material must be relevant to children's daily lives so that it is easy to understand and practice; and (5) Character-oriented: not only increasing knowledge, but forming real Islamic behavior (Alfani et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2022; Oskar et al., 2025; Satra et al., 2025; Suryana et al., 2022).

3.2.3. National Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Integration of Islamic Values

The 2013 Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curriculum in Indonesia defines six aspects of child development: religious and moral values, physical-motor skills, cognitive skills, language skills, social-emotional skills, and the arts. The National Awareness religious and moral values aspect is even placed first, demonstrating the government's priority on early character development in children (Oktari et al., 2025). However, in practice, the integration of Islamic values is often limited to ritual activities, such as praying before studying or memorizing short surahs. In fact, the Islamic curriculum emphasizes the integration of values into all aspects of a child's life. For example, learning to count can be linked to the concept of gratitude for God's blessings, while playing with friends can be a way to cultivate honesty, cooperation, and empathy.

A study by Oskar dan Suryana found that Islamic-based early childhood education institutions that successfully integrate values into their curriculum tend to emphasize practical activities, such as sharing food, maintaining cleanliness, and helping friends (Oskar et al., 2025; Suryana et al., 2022). This demonstrates that the religious and moral values curriculum must be applicable, not merely normative.

3.2.4. Religious and moral values Curriculum Material for Early Childhood

The religious and moral values curriculum material from an Islamic perspective can be categorized as follows: (1) Aqidah: introduction to Allah as the creator, a simple understanding of monotheism, and growing a sense of love for the Prophet Muhammad; (2) Worship: getting used to daily prayers, memorizing short surahs, practicing ablution, and simple prayers gradually; (3) Morals: values such as honesty, politeness, discipline, patience, responsibility, and caring for others and the environment; (4) Social: practicing cooperation, empathy, and sharing in daily interactions with peers (Ningtyaz et al., 2025; Oskar et al., 2025; Saepudin, 2022; Suryana et al., 2022). This material needs to be developed flexibly according to the child's age, interests, and needs. For example, children aged 4–5 can be taught short prayers with songs, while children aged 5–6 can begin to be introduced to simple congregational prayer practices (Birbili, 2019).

3.2.5. Challenges in Implementing the religious and moral values Curriculum

Although the religious and moral values curriculum has been formally regulated, its implementation faces several obstacles: (1) Limited teacher competency: many early childhood education teachers do not have a deep understanding of Islamic education, so that the teaching of moral values is mechanical; (2) Academic tendencies of early childhood education**:** some institutions place more emphasis on reading-writing-arithmetic than character education; dan (3) The influence of digital media**:** Children are exposed to global values that often conflict with Islam. The curriculum needs to be adaptive to address this challenge (Ningtyaz et al., 2025).

3.2.6. Implications of the religious and moral values Curriculum

The primary implication of the RVM curriculum is the formation of a generation of Muslims with character from an early age. A curriculum integrated with Islamic values will produce children who are not only academically intelligent but also possess spiritual, emotional, and social intelligence (Ainnin & Ismail, 2024). Thus, the religious and moral values curriculum serves as a crucial foundation for the nation's moral resilience amidst the tide of globalization.

3.3. Methods for Teaching Religious and Moral Values to Early Childhood Children

A learning method is a method or approach used by educators to achieve learning objectives. In the context of early childhood religious and moral values education, the method chosen must be appropriate to the child's developmental characteristics, namely learning through concrete experiences, play, and social interaction (Novienda, 2022). The method must also be grounded in Islamic values, so that it not only conveys knowledge but also instills morals and fosters Islamic behavior.

3.3.1. Basic Principles of Methods in Islam

From an Islamic perspective, learning methods are inseparable from the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah. QS. An-Nahl: 125 provides general guidelines on how to educate, namely *bil-hikmah* (with wisdom), *mau'izhah hasanah* (good advice), and *mujadalah billati hiya ahsan* (dialogue in the best way) (al-Jamal, 2018; Khatib al-Ray, 1981). This principle emphasizes that educational methods must be adapted to the student's circumstances, prioritize gentleness, and avoid coercion (Alfani et al., 2025).

Rasulullah SAW in educating friends and children used the approach of example (*uswah hasanah*), habituation, and stories (Alfani et al., 2025). For example, he exemplifies honesty in everyday life, teaches children to pray from the age of seven, and tells stories of the prophets to instill the values of faith and morals.

3.3.2. Development Theory and Learning Methods

In psychological theory, Piaget (1932) emphasized that early childhood is in the pre-operational stage (2–7 years), where they think symbolically but are still egocentric (Garrigan et al., 2018; Oktari et al., 2025). Therefore, learning methods must be concrete, imaginative, and based on direct experience. Vygotsky (1978), through the concept of *the zone of proximal development (ZPD),* emphasized the importance of the role of teachers or adults in guiding children to internalize values (Kolly-Shamne, 2022). The religious and moral values learning method, according to this theory, involves *scaffolding*, or providing temporary support until children are able to independently apply values.

Bandura (1977), using social learning theory, asserts that children learn through observation and imitation (Proctor & Niemeyer, 2020). This aligns with the Islamic concept of *uswah hasanah*, where teachers and parents serve as primary moral role models (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997).

3.3.3. Various religious and moral values Learning Methods in Islam

Various religious and moral values Learning Methods in Islam: (a) Role Model (*Uswah Hasanah*). Early childhood tends to imitate adult behavior. Therefore, good role models from teachers and parents are the primary method in religious and moral values education. For example, teachers who practice greetings, speak honestly, and are patient with children will automatically be imitated by students; (b) Habituation Method. Habituation is a practical strategy for consistently instilling values. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed parents to instill prayer in their children from the age of seven (Narrated by Abu Dawud) (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997). In the context of early childhood education (PAUD), habits can include praying before meals, sharing with friends, maintaining cleanliness, and expressing gratitude; (c) The Story and Quranic Tale Method. Stories are an effective method because young children have strong imaginations. The stories of the prophets in the Quran can be used as a means of instilling the values of faith, patience, and honesty (Sakila & Sutrisno, 2023); (d) Play Methods. Play is a child's world. Through play, children learn about honesty, cooperation, and discipline (Yuliantini et al., 2025). Montessori (1967) emphasized the importance of educational play for children's moral and social development. From an Islamic perspective, play can also be linked to religious values, for example, role-playing about congregational prayer; (e) Questions. to spark children's curiosity. For example, he asked Abdullah ibn Abbas, *"O little boy, do you know what Allah's rights are over His servants?"*

(Narrated by Tirmidhi). This type of dialogue encourages children to think critically and builds moral awareness; (f) Islamic Reward and Punishment Methods. Islam permits rewards to encourage good behavior, as well as mild punishments to correct deviant behavior (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997). However, both must be proportionate, educational, and non-traumatic. Skinner's (1953) *operant conditioning theory* supports the use of reward-punishment as behavioral reinforcers, but Islam emphasizes this within a framework of compassion.

3.4 Learning Media for Religious and Moral Values for Early Childhood

Learning media is a tool used to convey messages or materials so that they are more easily understood by students. In the context of early childhood religious and moral values education, media serves as a bridge between abstract concepts and concrete experiences. Early childhood has limited ability to understand abstractions, so media that is engaging, visual, and appropriate to the child's world is essential (Poku, 2025).

3.4.1 Normative and Philosophical Basis

Islam emphasizes the importance of using media in education, especially media that taps into children's sensory aspects. Surah An-Nahl: 78 states that humans are given hearing, sight, and a heart to be grateful. This verse demonstrates that the senses are the primary entry points for the learning process, allowing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic media to be utilized optimally. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also frequently used tangible objects in education. For example, he drew lines on the ground to explain the straight path of Islam and its deviating branches (Narrated by Ahmad). This is an example of the use of simple yet effective media in values learning (al-Nahlawi, 2010).

3.4.2 Principles of Using religious and moral values Media

Islamic based religious and moral values learning media must meet the following principles: (1) Relevance: media must be in accordance with religious and moral values learning objectives, such as strengthening faith, instilling morals, and getting used to worship; (2) Simplicity: media should be simple and easy for young children to understand; (3) Safety: media must be safe for children to use, both physically and in terms of content; (4) Contextuality: media must be related to children's daily lives so that the values taught are easy to practice; (5) Islamic values: media must be free from elements that contradict Islamic teachings, such as images or songs that are not in accordance with Islamic law (Poku, 2025).

3.4.3 Types of Media in religious and moral values Learning

Types of Media in religious and moral values Learning: (a) Visual media. Pictures, posters, picture cards, and flannel boards can be used to introduce daily prayers, the pillars of Islam, or good morals. For example, a picture of children sharing food can stimulate a discussion about the value of caring; (b) Audio media such. as Islamic songs, Quranic recitations, or recorded stories can be used to cultivate moral sensitivity. In Islam, recitation of recitations also serves to calm the heart and instill spiritual values; (c) Audiovisual media. Islamic short films or animations can be effective. Animation is highly appealing to young children. For example, the stories of the Prophet Abraham and the Prophet Yunus, visualized in Islamic animation, can instill the values of faith and patience; (d) Concrete Media (Real Objects). Real objects such as prayer mats, prayer beads, or halal food can be used to explain the concepts of worship and halal and haram; (e) Interactive Digital Media**.** In the digital age, Islamic app-based media for children can be utilized, such as daily prayer apps or educational Islamic games. However, their use must be under adult supervision to prevent excessive use (Koć-Januchta et al., 2017; Poku, 2025; Saeverot & Torgersen, 2016).

3.4.4 Learning Theory and Media Relevance

According to Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory, information is more easily understood when presented through both verbal and visual channels (Koć-Januchta et al., 2017; Saeverot

& Torgersen, 2016). Therefore, combining stories with images or videos is very effective for religious and moral values learning.

Multimedia theory also emphasizes that audiovisual media enhances understanding because it involves more than one learning modality. This aligns with the Islamic principle of utilizing the senses to understand the truth (Koć-Januchta et al., 2017; Saeverot & Torgersen, 2016). From an Islamic perspective, learning media must also contain *good manners* and *wisdom*. Al-Attas (1991) emphasized that the delivery of knowledge must be accompanied by good manners, so that media should not be merely entertainment, but must function to instill moral and spiritual awareness (Al-Attas, 1999; Jannah et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2024).

3.5 Evaluation of Religious and Moral Values Learning for Early Childhood

Evaluation is a crucial part of the educational process, including in the teaching of religious and moral values in early childhood. Evaluation goes beyond measuring outcomes; it also monitors a child's spiritual, moral, social, and emotional development (Aulia & Sitorus, 2025). From an Islamic perspective, evaluation is closely linked to the concepts of *muhasabah* (introspection) and *hisab* (accountability). This means that evaluation not only assesses external achievements but also emphasizes the development of a child's inner awareness and concrete behavior (Wahidi et al., 2025).

3.5.1 Philosophical and Normative Basis

In Islam, evaluation of religious and moral values education is based on QS. Al-Hashr: 18: *"O you who believe, fear Allah and let everyone pay attention to what he has done for tomorrow."* This verse emphasizes the importance of introspection and self-evaluation in moral education (al-Jamal, 2018; Khatib al-Ray, 1981).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasized the principle of continuous observation in educating children. He reprimanded, guided, and set an example when his companions or children made mistakes. This demonstrates that evaluation in Islam is educational, not simply a numerical assessment (Putri & Fiqiyah, 2025; 'Ulwan, 1997).

3.5.2 Religious and moral values Evaluation Principles from an Islamic Perspective

Evaluation of early childhood religious and moral values learning must follow the following principles: (1) Holistic includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, not just memorizing prayers or religious knowledge; (2) Formative and Processual carried out continuously during learning activities, not just at the end; (3) Naturalistic assessing children in everyday contexts, through observation of real behaviors, such as sharing with friends or praying before meals; (4) Individualistic paying attention to the development of each child because each child has a different tempo; (5) Humanistic-Islamic emphasizes a compassionate approach, guidance, and role model, rather than harsh punishment (Aulia & Sitorus, 2025; Birbili, 2019; Ningtyaz et al., 2025; Oskar et al., 2025).

3.5.3 Evaluation Techniques in religious and moral values Learning.

Evaluation Techniques in religious and moral values Learning (a) Behavioral Observations. Teachers observe children's daily interactions, such as whether they greet, share, or help friends. Observations are conducted in natural, unstressed situations; (b) Children's Portfolio. Children's work such as drawings of mosques, prayer writings, or moral project activities are collected as evidence of the development of religious and moral values; (c) Parent Interviews. Collaboration with parents is crucial because religious and moral values education takes place not only at school but also at home. Interviews help teachers understand the consistency of a child's behavior within the family environment; (d) Simple Self-Assessment. Children can be asked to choose a smiling, blank, or sad face to express whether they've done something good that day. While simple, this practice fosters moral awareness from an early age; (e) Moral Development Checklist. Teachers can use a checklist of moral behaviors as an instrument, such as saying daily prayers, respecting teachers, not grabbing toys, and helping

friends. This checklist is used to monitor the consistency of behavior (Aulia & Sitorus, 2025; Wahidi et al., 2025).

3.6 Identified Strategies for Strengthening religious and moral values Education in Early Childhood

To respond to this challenge, this study identifies five strategic components that consistently appear across the literature as effective in strengthening religious and moral values in early childhood settings. These strategies are then linked to the current moral degradation phenomenon to highlight their urgency and relevance.

The synthesis of academic sources reveals five major strategies, which collectively form an integrated Islamic pedagogical model:

3.6.1 Strategy 1: Value Habituation through Daily Routines

Classical scholars such as al-Ghazali and Ulwan emphasize that moral character is formed through repetition (*ta'wid*). Empirical studies in Indonesian early childhood education institutions also confirm that routine-based practices, morning greetings, prayer recitations, shared responsibilities, cleanliness routines, help internalize kindness, discipline, gratitude, and social empathy. This strategy directly counters early signs of moral degradation, such as indiscipline, disrespect, and lack of empathy, increasingly observed among modern children.

3.6.2 Strategy 2: Role Modeling and Exemplary Conduct (*Uswah Hasanah*)

Children imitate the actions of adults, especially teachers. Literature in both Islamic pedagogy and Western theories (Bandura's social learning) shows that consistent modeling of politeness, honesty, compassion, and self-control is essential.

In the context of rising disrespect, verbal aggression, and behavioral misconduct among young learners, role modeling becomes a primary defense against value erosion.

3.6. 3 Strategy 3: Integrating religious and moral values into Play-Based and Inquiry Learning

Successful early childhood education programs integrate moral and religious values into play scenarios, storytelling, group projects, and problem-solving. This aligns with children's developmental needs while embedding values organically rather than through didactic teaching. This strategy targets the problem of children increasingly influenced by digital entertainment, which often promotes instant gratification, selfishness, and aggression.

3. 6.4 Strategy 4: Contextual and Culturally Relevant Media

Islamic storytelling, visual media, songs, and character-based animations grounded in local culture are shown to reinforce children's moral imagination. This is crucial in the era of digital saturation where children consume media content that may normalize violence, disrespect, or moral relativism. Thus, contextual moral media counteract negative digital influences shaping young children's behavior and identity.

3.6.5 Strategy 5: Strengthening Parent–School Collaboration

Moral reinforcement at home is critical. Research indicates that children's moral decline is strongly connected to inconsistent value reinforcement at home, parental digital negligence, and weakened family communication. Therefore, sustained teacher–parent partnerships (via home routines, communication books, parenting seminars) form a strategic response to the erosion of values within family environments.

3.7 Linking Strategies to the Current Phenomenon of Moral Degradation

A major contribution of this study is demonstrating how Islamic pedagogical strategies intersect with real, contemporary problems of moral decline among young children. Recent educational reports and empirical observations in Indonesia show: (a) Increasing digital media exposure among early childhood is associated with impulsive behavior, imitation of inappropriate content, and reduced attention span; (b) Declining respect for elders and

weakening family communication due to busy parental schedules; (c) Social behavior challenges (aggressiveness, bullying tendencies, reduced empathy) observed even in early childhood classes; (d) Value relativism among children influenced by globalized media narratives.

Table 2. The identified strategies address these challenges directly:

Moral Degradation Phenomenon	Relevant RVM Strategy	How the Strategy Responds
Digital influence & behavioral imitation	Media-based value integration; Role modeling	Provides positive examples; replaces harmful digital content with Islamic value media
Decline of respect & courtesy	Habituation-based routines; *Uswah Hasanah*	Instills manners through repetition and adult modeling
Reduced empathy & cooperation	Play-based RVM integration	Strengthens prosocial behavior through role play & group tasks
Family communication weakening	Parent–school collaboration	Ensures value continuity at home; reduces inconsistency
Value confusion in global era	Curriculum integration of Islamic moral principles	Strengthens identity formation and moral stability

Thus, the strategies identified in this study not only reflect theoretical Islamic pedagogy but also function as practical interventions responding to current socio-cultural problems. Despite providing a comprehensive conceptual synthesis of religious and moral values education from Islamic perspectives, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research relies solely on library-based data without field observations; therefore, it does not capture the lived experiences of teachers, parents, or children in actual PAUD settings. This limits the study's ability to measure the real-world effectiveness of the strategies identified. Second, the analysis depends on the availability and scope of published literature. Some empirical studies—particularly those conducted in local Indonesian early childhood education institutions—may not be accessible through indexed databases, resulting in potential gaps in representing grassroots practices. Third, the study does not employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, which could provide stronger evidence of causal relationships between specific religious and moral values strategies and children's moral development outcomes. Finally, the rapidly evolving digital landscape poses new challenges to early childhood moral development, but this study relies on literature published up to 2023; consequently, the analysis may not fully capture the most recent trends in children's digital behavior and moral shifts.

These limitations suggest that future research should incorporate field-based empirical studies, longitudinal designs, and digital-era behavioral assessments to validate and expand the conceptual framework proposed in this work.

4. CONCLUSION

This study acknowledges that its reliance on library research limits the ability to capture real classroom dynamics and the lived experiences of teachers, parents, and children, and therefore cannot empirically measure the direct impact of the religious and moral values strategies identified. Moreover, the analysis depends on available published literature, which may not fully represent local early childhood education practices across Indonesia, and does not incorporate quantitative or longitudinal data that could strengthen causal conclusions about moral development. Despite these limitations, the study concludes that strengthening early childhood religious and moral values education is essential in responding to increasing moral degradation influenced by digital exposure, weakened family communication, and shifting

socio-cultural norms. Practically, the findings emphasize that moral development in early childhood must be approached through an integrated Islamic pedagogical framework that includes consistent habituation routines, exemplary role modelling, value-based play, contextual media, and strong parent–school collaboration. Based on these insights, the study recommends that practitioners adopt routine-based and play-based moral activities aligned with Islamic values, integrate value education into school culture rather than treating it as isolated lessons, and develop media literacy programs for parents to manage children's digital consumption. Policy makers should enhance teacher training in Islamic moral pedagogy and strengthen guidelines for value-based early childhood education curricula, while future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical field studies, longitudinal observations, and evaluations of digital-era moral challenges to validate and expand the conceptual framework proposed in this research.

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