

Fostering Discipline in Early Childhood through Religious Practices: A Study of an Islamic Kindergarten in Makassar

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Abstract

This study explores how structured and systematic approaches, integrated with religious practices, develop disciplined behavior in children at an Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Makassar, Indonesia. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation over two weeks using a phenomenological qualitative method. Key findings demonstrate that consistent routines, teacher examples, and positive reinforcement significantly enhance discipline, contributing to strong character formation in children. This research enriches the literature on early childhood education, particularly in integrating Islamic teachings into discipline strategies, and provides actionable insights for educators in similar contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth aged 0-6 years. Early childhood is so important, often called the golden age (golden age). In this golden age, children always explore what they want to do. Every parent also wants their children to grow up to be healthy, intelligent, creative, independent, faithful, and fearful children to Allah SWT. Hope to make them the best who can support their lives in the future or for the child's good. Ni Luh Ika Windayani et al., *Theory and Application of Early Childhood Education* (East Jakarta: Muhammad Zaini Publisher Foundation, 2021).

Early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years, which is carried out through the provision of educational stimulus to help growth and physical and spiritual development so that children are ready to enter further education, both formal education at school and non-formal. Early childhood education is an important level of education in child development. At this time, early childhood education has received more attention from the government, as evidenced by the establishment of many early childhood education institutions in regions, rural areas, or urban areas. In addition, it has been fully realized that the development of children occurs more at an early age ([Maghfiroh & Suryana, 2021](#)).

One of the aspects that needs to be developed in early childhood is social-emotional. Early childhood is one of the most important periods, as it is a critical developmental stage. It is at this time that a person's personality is formed. The experiences during this period tend to persist and affect the child's attitude. Social-emotional development is one of the rapid advances for early childhood, including instilling discipline that affects children from an early age. The role of parents and teachers in schools in developing children's social and emotional behavior is taken by instilling from an early age the importance of fostering behaviors and attitudes that can be done through good habits ([Hasanah & Priyantoro, 2019](#)).

Developing social-emotional behavior is the primary basis for directing children's personalities under the values upheld in society. The social and emotional behaviors expected from early childhood include discipline, independence, responsibility, confidence, honesty, fairness, loyalty to friends, compassion for others, and high tolerance. Instilling discipline in early childhood is an effort to develop social attitudes that are acceptable to others; disciplined behavior in society in early childhood is directed to good social development, such as cooperation, sympathy, empathy, good interaction, and mutual need ([Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019](#)).

Education is changing a person or group's attitude and behavior to mature human beings through teaching and training efforts. The initiative versus guilt stage is the ability of children to participate in various physical activities and take the initiative for action. Child development is changing behavior from immature to mature, simple to complex, and human beings evolving from dependent to independent adult beings. M PD in Zubairi, *Learning to be Moral* (Bogor: Adab Publishers, 2022).

Child development is a process of change in which children learn to master a higher level of aspects of movement, thinking, feeling, and interaction, both with others and with objects in their environment ([Sutianah, 2022](#)). Children's discipline is to provide an understanding of what is good

and evil. Discipline education needs to be instilled in children, and making mistakes contains several consequences, for that is the function of punishment in children's education. Discipline is a valued behavior that can be done by force and can be done voluntarily. From an early age, discipline must be carried out voluntarily and through play ([Cahya, 2020](#)). Teachers, the community, and parents are the most influential factors in disciplining children ([Susanti et al., 2018](#)).

Discipline is critical and most important for every individual, and it must be present and instilled from an early age. By developing disciplined behavior, children will be able to control good behavior in an orderly manner and not let others control them. Discipline is the method of advice, discussion, example, habituation, and education through stories ([Sari, 2018](#)).

Discipline can be formed when taught and applied continuously. When discipline occurs continuously, habits will be formed. However, parents generally discipline their children by applying rules and preparing specific punishments when children do not follow them. That is where we associate regulation and discipline. The most fundamental effort is to invite children to activate themselves with moral values to develop the basics of discipline. In addition, discipline can be carried out and taught to children anywhere by making rules that children must obey ([Rizkon, 2019](#)).

From an early age, it is necessary to instill a disciplined attitude; from here, children will learn to be responsible for their actions in the family, school, and other social environments. Students will understand that consequences accompany each action, so children will be careful. When a child is born into the world, discipline is not immediately possessed but formed because of his environment. Discipline includes adult teaching, guidance, or encouragement to help children learn and live as social beings to achieve optimal growth and development ([S. W. Ridwan, 2023](#)).

Teachers play a significant role in instilling discipline. They are responsible for the entire learning process, including cultivating student discipline. Teachers are expected to be able to train and teach habituation in every student activity. They should be able to get children used to being disciplined and following school rules. Teachers can also bridge children's and parents' behavior by applying the discipline taught ([A. Ridwan et al., 2023](#)).

The results of observations from September to November 2022 at Nurul Fikri Makassar IT Kindergarten show that children's awareness in terms of discipline is very worthy of appreciation. In every routine the teacher conveys, all students carry out their activities well, study hard, are enthusiastic about receiving lessons, and are orderly. After receiving lessons well, students are directed to play well. Then, all students returned to indoor activities to make skills. All students are enthusiastic about making every work their teachers have explained.

Not only is the discipline of students' social-emotional development in interacting and receiving direction highly upheld at Nurul Fikri Makassar IT Kindergarten School, but the spiritual development of children is also highly upheld. With the introduction and memorization of verses of the Qur'an, getting used to sunnah and obligatory prayers in congregation, instilling good morals, and applying religious values, children can adjust to discipline in doing good things every day.

The urgency of this research topic lies in the instillation of disciplined behavior in early childhood, which is very important in forming children's

character and personality. At an early age, children are in a critical phase of development where their surroundings very easily influence them. Implementing good, disciplined behavior can help children develop a responsible, independent attitude and good self-control. Religious education also plays a role in forming children's morals and ethics. By instilling disciplined behavior, children can become obedient to the rules and have good morals and ethics based on Islamic teachings.

In addition, the urgency of this research is also driven by the need to understand effective methods for teaching discipline in early childhood. Given educators' challenges in creating a conducive learning environment and disciplining without coercion, this study provides insight into teachers' approaches to positively and educationally instilling discipline. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for other educational institutions in developing effective discipline strategies that follow Islamic values.

Research on instilling disciplined behavior in early childhood has been widely conducted, one of which is a study conducted by Mega Oka Waty, which focuses on describing the strategy of instilling discipline in early childhood at Darunnajah Ulujami Islamic Kindergarten, South Jakarta, and the factors that influence this discipline, thus concluding that the implementation of discipline in schools is carried out through the application of regulations, punishments, rewards, and consistency. The principal and teachers have implemented a democratic strategy in instilling discipline in children despite challenges from the family environment and limited teacher attention. Cooperation between schools and parents is crucial for children's discipline ([Waty, 2020](#)).

Another study by Andi Anugrah Pratiwi focuses on determining indicators of instilling discipline in children and the strategies used to instill discipline in Pancamarga Mattirowalie Kindergarten, Tanete Riattang Barat District, Bone Regency, thus concluding that instilling discipline in the kindergarten has been implemented but still needs improvement because it is not optimal, by teaching various disciplinary activities such as arriving on time, wearing uniforms, lining up, and others. The strategy used is a democratic strategy that provides freedom but still requires teacher supervision and guidance ([Andi Anugrah Pratiwi, 2021](#)).

Although previous studies, such as those conducted by Mega Oka Waty and Andi Anugrah Pratiwi, have provided valuable insights into instilling disciplined behavior in early childhood, some gaps still need to be addressed. One of the main gaps is the lack of focus on the integration between instilling discipline and religious education holistically. Existing research emphasizes implementing regulations, punishments, rewards, and democratic strategies in instilling discipline. However, there has not been much research that examines in depth how disciplinary values can be integrated with Islamic teachings to shape children's character and morals. Research at Nurul Fikri Makassar Integrated Islamic Kindergarten provides a new contribution by showing that integration between disciplinary values and religious teachings can be done through activities such as praying together, memorizing the verses of the Qur'an, and praying Dhuha in congregation. This approach instills discipline and shapes children's morals and spirituality from an early age, which has not been widely discussed in previous research.

In addition, there is a gap in understanding the role of teachers as role models in instilling disciplined behavior. Previous studies have highlighted

the importance of consistency and the application of democratic strategies by teachers. However, not many have explored more deeply how the role models set by teachers can effectively influence the formation of children's discipline. This research emphasized the importance of role models set by teachers, such as dressing neatly, greeting them in a friendly manner, and participating in routine activities with children. These role models are very effective in forming disciplined behavior in children. However, further research is still needed to measure how these teacher role models impact children's character development. This study paves the way for further studies on the importance of consistency and active involvement of teachers in every aspect of teaching and learning activities to instill disciplinary values effectively. Based on this presentation, this study aims to describe the role of teachers in instilling discipline in children at Nurul Fikri IT Kindergarten Makassar.

METHOD

The research approach applied in this study is a qualitative method with phenomenological research ([Nasir et al., 2023](#)). The qualitative approach is descriptive and analyzes the data according to the problems raised and examines cases, phenomena, and community activities, as well as the views and thoughts of individuals or groups. This research was carried out for two weeks at Nurul Fikri IT Kindergarten Makassar using non-test instruments such as observation sheets, interviews, and documentation. Primary data sources were obtained from words generated by teachers and students of group B at Nurul Fikri IT Kindergarten Makassar. At the same time, secondary data came from relevant notes, books, or documents.

The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation ([Ardiansyah et al., 2023](#)). Observations were conducted to record students' attitudes and behaviors in implementing disciplinary behavior, interviews with parents and teachers to get an overview of the implementation of learning and challenges faced in the classroom, and documentation to collect visual evidence during the observation process. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The validity of the data is checked using triangulation techniques and source triangulation to ensure the credibility of the data. Triangulation techniques check data through various sources, while source triangulation checks data with different techniques such as interviews and observations ([Sidiq et al., 2019](#)).

RESULT

Disciplined behavior in early childhood is important in forming children's character and personality. It is achieved through a structured and systematic approach, including religious activities and daily routines, which help children develop a strong attitude of discipline.

We collected direct information from teachers about implementing school discipline strategies, such as daily routines, religious practices, teacher examples, positive reinforcement, and supervision. The main strategies implemented at Nurul Fikri Makassar Integrated Islamic Kindergarten include:

1. Daily Routine

The daily routine includes simple but effective activities to instill discipline in children. Activities such as greeting teachers and friends every morning teach children to appreciate others and build positive habits from an early age. In addition, children are also taught to take off their footwear before entering the classroom. This activity teaches cleanliness and disciplines children to follow the rules set. Every child has a special place to store their footwear, so they learn to be responsible for their belongings.

Tidying up things after they are finished is an important part of the daily routine at this kindergarten. Children are trained to return toys, books, and stationery to their original place after use. This habit teaches children the responsibility and importance of tidying the environment. This activity is repeated daily to become part of the children's habits. Through this repetition, children will naturally internalize the importance of neatness and responsibility.

In addition, a structured daily routine also includes a regular study and play schedule. Children are taught to follow a predetermined schedule, such as time to study, rest, and play. This good timing helps children to understand the importance of time management and discipline in following schedules. Following a structured daily routine, children learn to be disciplined and responsible.



Picture 2. Daily Routine of Washing Your Hands Before Eating

The picture shows a joint meal activity supervised by teachers. These activities are part of a structured daily routine and consistent supervision, which helps to instill disciplined behavior in children. Activities such as washing hands before eating, sitting neatly, and saying prayers before and after meals are part of the daily routine structured at school. These routines teach children about cleanliness, order, and gratitude and help them develop good habits through daily repetition.

2. Religious Practices

Regular religious practices such as congregational dhuha prayers are one of the main ways to instill discipline in children. This activity is carried out every morning before the lesson so the children learn to start their day by worshipping. Congregational dhuha prayer teaches children the importance of worship and disciplines them regarding the time and procedure of praying. By performing the dhuha prayer regularly, children learn to be consistent and disciplined in carrying out their religious obligations.



Picture 3. Religious Practice of Dhuha Prayer Activities

The picture shows congregational dhuha prayer activities. This activity reflects implementing religious practices in schools, which aim to integrate religious values with discipline. Through this activity, children learn the importance of regularly worshiping, improving their spiritual development, and building the habit of discipline in carrying out religious obligations. Congregational prayer also teaches children about order, togetherness, and consistency in worship.

In addition to the dhuha prayer, children are taught to read and memorize short surahs from the Qur'an. This activity is carried out daily as part of the religious curriculum. Through this activity, children develop reading and memorization skills and learn to be disciplined in repeating and memorizing holy verses. This practice helps children to build good study habits and improve their spiritual development.

The integration between religious values and discipline is also seen in activities such as joint prayer before and after learning. Children are taught to always pray before starting and ending activities so that they understand the importance of communicating with Allah SWT in every aspect of their lives. This habit instills spiritual discipline and forms the character of children who are always grateful and remember Allah SWT in their every action. Thus, religious practices teach religious values and discipline children.

3. Teacher's Example

Teachers play an important role in instilling discipline through example. The teachers at this school are always neatly dressed and polite, greet students every morning, and actively participate in every daily activity with students. This example provides a real example to children on how to behave disciplined and polite. Children tend to imitate what they see from their teachers, so this example effectively shapes disciplined behavior in children.



Picture 4. Teachers as role models

The picture shows teaching and learning activities, where children are doing art activities with the guidance of teachers. Teachers directly guide and accompany children during art activities and provide tangible examples of disciplined and orderly behavior. This example is important because children tend to imitate their teachers' behavior. By demonstrating a disciplined attitude, such as following a schedule appropriately, using art tools correctly, and working together in a group, teachers help children understand and internalize the values of discipline through observation and imitation.

In addition, teachers are also consistent in implementing rules and routines in the classroom. Teachers instruct children to remove their footwear and store their belongings neatly every morning before starting lessons. Teachers also ensure that each child follows a predetermined daily schedule, such as study time, playtime, and rest time. This consistency helps children understand the importance of following rules and routines and developing the habit of discipline in daily life.

Teachers also give awards and praise to children who show disciplined behavior. For example, teachers praise children who always arrive on time, tidy up their belongings after use, or show politeness to friends and teachers. This award provides additional motivation for children to maintain their disciplined behavior. By setting a good and consistent example and giving appropriate awards, teachers have instilled strong discipline in children.

4. Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a very effective strategy for instilling discipline in children. Teachers give praise and rewards to children who show good behavior and discipline. For example, when a child completes a task on time or tidies up his things well, the teacher will give him a small compliment or reward, such as a sticker or a star. This award gives positive encouragement to children to continue to maintain good behavior.



Picture 5. Positive Reinforcement Strategies for Direct Interaction

The image shows direct interaction activities between teachers and students, where teachers give individual attention to students. This direct interaction between teachers and students reflects a positive reinforcement strategy. Teachers give attention and perhaps praise or appreciation to students, which helps motivate students to maintain good behavior and discipline. This positive reinforcement, which includes giving praise or small rewards for students' achievements or efforts, is good in building good discipline habits. By providing constructive and positive feedback, teachers help children feel valued and motivated to continue to behave disciplined.

In addition, awards are given individually and in groups. For example, if the class follows the rules well for one week, the teacher will reward them with extra playtime or a fun, unique activity. This group award helps build a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility among the children. They learn that discipline is not only an individual responsibility but also a shared responsibility as a class.

Positive reinforcement is also applied through the provision of constructive feedback. When a child makes a mistake or breaks the rules, the teacher provides punishment and guidance but also explains and provides guidance on how to behave. This way, children learn from their mistakes and understand the importance of following the rules. This approach helps children see discipline as something positive and beneficial to their development, not scary or burdensome.

5. Supervision

Consistent supervision is key to instilling discipline. Teachers always supervise children during daily activities, ensuring they adhere to the rules and follow the routine well. This supervision is done gently and attentively so children feel safe and supported in their activities. With constant supervision, children become more aware of the importance of discipline and feel encouraged always to behave well.



Picture 6. Supervision When Children Are Playing

The picture shows play and interaction activities supervised by teachers at the "Center for Arts and Creativity". Teachers who supervise children while playing reflect the importance of supervision in instilling discipline. Consistent supervision ensures children follow the rules, play safely, and behave well during activities. With supervision, teachers can provide direct guidance and intervention if needed, strengthening children's disciplined behavior through daily supervision. It helps children internalize the values of discipline and responsibility in each activity.

Supervision is also carried out through regular consultations between teachers and parents. Teachers provide regular child development reports to parents so they can work together to monitor and improve monitor and improve children's behavior. Teachers also open psychological services for children who need special attention, providing more in-depth and targeted solutions to discipline problems. Cooperation between teachers and parents is essential to ensure that the discipline taught at school is also applied at home.

In addition, supervision is carried out through a liaison book, which is used as a daily evaluation. The book records every child's activities and behaviors throughout the day, providing teachers and parents with a clear picture of the child's development. With this structured supervision system, teachers can provide prompt and appropriate intervention. Children also learn to take responsibility for their actions because they know their behavior is continuously monitored and evaluated. Consistent supervision helps children to form strong and sustained discipline habits.

DISCUSSION

One of the important things in shaping children's discipline habits is a daily routine. It is known that the daily routine is designed to instill discipline and responsibility in children through simple yet impactful activities. Greeting teachers and friends each morning fosters respect and positive social habits while removing footwear before entering classrooms teaches cleanliness and adherence to rules. Children learn responsibility by storing their footwear in designated places and tidying up toys, books, and stationery after use, reinforcing the importance of organization and accountability. A structured schedule, including study, rest, and playtime, helps children understand time management and follow routines effectively. Mealtime activities include washing hands, sitting neatly, reciting prayers, emphasizing cleanliness, order, and gratitude, and encouraging the development of disciplined behaviors through consistent practice.

Aligned with Nurma and Purnama in their research, the daily routine includes various activities that aim to instill religious and moral values in children from an early age. One of the activities carried out was to say greetings and shake hands. Children are accustomed to saying greetings and shaking hands with teachers when coming and going from school ([Nurma Nurma & Purnama, 2022](#)).

The formation of children's habits by daily routines is significant because, in its nature, they consciously repeat activities that are carried out. Habit is often associated with repetition ([Gardner et al., 2022](#)). Linder et al. said habits are formed by repeating actions within stable and consistent contexts ([Linder et al., 2022](#)). Research suggests that when actions are consistently repeated in the same environment or under similar circumstances, they become ingrained in memory pathways, reducing cognitive effort over time and facilitating habitual behavior ([Buabang et al., 2024](#)).

The second important thing is cultivating religious values by implementing religious activities. It aligns with Asy'ari and Indri, who explained early childhood religious activity. In practice, parents use methods such as habituation, repetition, memorization, and advice to help children master the basics of religion, such as memorizing short letters, daily prayers, and simple hadiths ([Asy'ari & Indri M, 2019](#)).

Spiritual experiences are significant in children's lives and are recognized in educational policies. By addressing spirituality comprehensively, educators and policymakers can better support children's holistic development, safeguarding their human rights and fostering psychological qualities vital for civil societies ([Polemikou & Da Silva, 2020](#)).

The teacher is the leading figure who plays an important role in introducing spirituality to young children at school. Examples and role models are other factors contributing to the formation of disciplinary behavior in children. A study suggested that teachers are important role models for children's behavior during early childhood ([Cheung, 2019](#)).

Aligned with this, Sufiani explained that the teacher's role model in forming Islamic character in early childhood involves several important aspects. Teachers give examples such as praying before and after carrying out activities, teaching prayer procedures, and getting children used to dhikr. In addition, teachers also instill Islamic values in students in terms of behaving politely and responsibly and having good morals in interaction with fellow humans ([Sufiani, 2024](#)).

In addition to those key factors, it is also important to give positive reinforcement to children. It is in line with Dialektika et al., who explained that Positive reinforcement in early childhood increases positive behavior by providing pleasant reinforcement after the desired behavior is displayed. The purpose of positive reinforcement is so that the desired behavior tends to be repeated, improved, and settled in the future ([Dialektika et al., 2023](#)).

Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in promoting appropriate behaviors and skills among young children. A study published in *Young Exceptional Children* emphasizes that positive reinforcement is essential for supporting young children's use of appropriate behaviors and skills ([Hardy & McLeod, 2020](#)).

The last key is supervision. Supervision plays a pivotal role in fostering discipline among children during play activities. That is in line with Azian's explanation that early childhood supervision is an important process in institutional management that ensures that all planned activities follow the expected goals ([Azian, 2022](#)).

A study on the effects of teachers' supervision on kindergarten pupils' safety found that adequate supervision creates a safe school environment that promotes teaching and learning. The study discovered that when teachers involve themselves in learners' play while supervising, it energizes children to engage more in play, making them feel happy and protected. Additionally, increased supervision was associated with fewer child injuries, highlighting its protective effect ([Fosu-Ayarkwah et al., 2022](#)). Active supervision involves focused attention and intentional observation, allowing educators to anticipate children's needs and intervene promptly, supporting positive behavior and discipline ([Austin et al., 2023](#)).

CONCLUSION

Research on cultivating disciplined behavior in children showed children's disciplinary behavior is formed through structured and systematic approaches, such as daily routines, religious practices, teacher example, positive reinforcement, and supervision. Students' awareness and responsibility in carrying out their obligations per school rules and regulations play a significant role in achieving these positive outcomes. Using these strategies helps children develop a strong attitude of discipline and form good character.

To further increase the effectiveness of instilling discipline in children, it is recommended to develop programs that support children's discipline, such

as training teachers to improve their ability to provide consistent examples and supervision. In addition, increased cooperation with parents through programs involving families in forming discipline is also highly encouraged to create a consistent environment between school and home.

This study has several limitations, one of which is the limitation of time and samples used. The study was conducted relatively short and involved only one Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, so the results may not be generalized to all schools with different characteristics. In addition, the data collection methods used are mainly based on observation and interviews, which can have subjective biases from researchers and respondents. Further research with a broader sample and more diverse methods is needed to obtain more comprehensive results.

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