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Habituation method as an effort to instill prayer values in early childhood based on the Qur'an and Hadith perspectives at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten Purwakarta

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Abstract

Food security in Sumedang Regency is challenged by several issues: (1) agricultural land conversion, (2) Instilling the values of prayer in early childhood plays a vital role in shaping children's religious character from an early age. Through consistent habituation carried out by parents or educators, prayer guidance can effectively help stimulate children to become more obedient and God-fearing individuals. This study aims to explore and describe how educators apply the habituation method as an effort to cultivate prayer values in early childhood from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith. This research was conducted at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten Purwakarta using a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that educators consistently implement the habituation of prayer values, enabling children to recognize the concept of prayer, understand its purpose, and perform it correctly. This practice is carried out daily through modeling and motivation provided by educators, resulting in enthusiastic and responsive children. From the Qur'an and Hadith perspective, it is emphasized that prayer education should begin at an early age through positive examples and regular routines. The study recommends that adults use gentle and consistent approaches in introducing prayer to children to develop a deep-rooted spiritual foundation.

Keywords: Habituation; prayer; early childhood; religious education; Islamic values

Introduction

In essence, children are a *trust* (*amānah*) bestowed by Allah upon their parents. It is the responsibility of both parents to educate and guide their children—whether the children grow up to be dutiful or disobedient depends significantly on parental upbringing, as every child is born in a state of *fiṭrah* (pure nature). Therefore, parents, as trustees, are obligated to provide proper education for their children. The family is the first and foremost educational environment, where children initially acquire knowledge that significantly impacts their future lives (Tadzkirah, 2020).

According to the National Education System Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, standards for early childhood development include several essential aspects, one of which is the development of religious and moral values. These encompass understanding and practicing one's religion, honesty, helpfulness, politeness, respect for others, and environmental cleanliness, as well as recognizing religious holidays and showing tolerance toward other beliefs. Such developmental goals can be fostered through the habituation of religious practices, which must be consistently implemented both in the home and school environments (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia, 2003).

Prayer (*ṣalāh*) is a fundamental form of worship in Islam, consisting of specific physical postures and verbal recitations, beginning with *takbīr* and ending with *salām*, performed under stipulated conditions (Rifa'i, 2017). It is the second pillar of Islam after the *shahāda*, and as emphasized in the Hadith narrated by al-Bayhaqī, prayer is the “pillar of religion”—its establishment signifies the upholding of the faith. The history of the Prophet Muhammad's *isrā'* and *mi'rāj* journey highlights prayer as a central act of devotion that brings the servant closer to the Creator (Daradjat, 2000).

Instilling prayer values from an early age is crucial in developing religious character. The repeated practice of prayer helps children internalize it as a routine, spiritual habit. According to Sofiwati and Dewi (2023), regular prayer habits enhance children's comprehension and ability to perform prayer rituals. Similarly, Normilah (2023) asserts that religious and moral values in early childhood can be effectively cultivated through consistent habituation practices in Islamic learning. The Qur'an and Hadith further support this approach, such as the directive to teach children to pray starting at the age of seven. Therefore, the habituation method, grounded in Islamic teachings, is seen as a powerful means to instill prayer values in early childhood.

Discussion and Analysis

The results of the study conducted at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten Purwakarta demonstrate the implementation of a daily prayer program aimed at instilling the values of worship in early childhood. This program is carried out through collaboration between parents and educators, specifically through congregational *Dhuḥā* prayer sessions conducted every Monday to Thursday after class, prior to the break. This habituation activity has been consistently implemented for approximately three years.

The main objective of this habituation is to foster the development of children's religious and moral values, particularly related to worship practices. These values should be instilled from an early age in order to encourage the formation of pious behavior and strong ethical foundations. Kartini (2017) emphasizes that the potential of early childhood to internalize prayer values can be optimally nurtured by parents and educators, as it plays a crucial role in shaping morally upright and religious individuals.

Through this habituation, children aged 5–6 in Group B at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten begin to understand the purpose and procedures of prayer. According to the class teacher, the intention of this approach is to help children become familiar with the meaning of prayer, get used to its implementation, and learn the physical movements and recitations. The habituation method facilitates the development of relatively permanent behaviors and attitudes through repetitive practice. As noted by Mulyati (cited in Sofiawati & Dewi, 2023), repeated exposure to direct application of theoretical content makes the learning process more accessible and impactful for children.

For over six months, the children have participated in daily *Dhuḥā* prayers by listening to prayer recitations through audiovisual media and following the guided movements demonstrated by the teacher. This consistent practice enables children to memorize the recitations and movements voluntarily. As the children become more proficient, the educator gradually removes audiovisual aids, allowing the children to lead the prayers themselves. This shift provides the educator with an opportunity to assess the extent to which prayer values have been internalized through habituation.

The process of instilling the *Dhuḥā* prayer habit also aligns with the Islamic concept of gradual and consistent religious training. According to Daradjat (2005), the Qur'an illustrates educational methods through gradual habituation, which plays a significant role in shaping commendable character in children. Moral education cannot rely solely on verbal explanations; it must be supported by consistent practice. As a result, children who are regularly trained in prayer are more likely to develop praiseworthy traits and avoid undesirable behavior.

The benefits of the prayer habituation method are evident in the children's daily routines. Without being explicitly aware, they begin to understand the importance of worship, develop consistent prayer habits, and internalize obedience and reverence toward Allah. The Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, narrated by Abu Dāwūd, underscores the importance of introducing prayer at the age of seven and applying discipline if children neglect it by age ten (Abu Daud Sulaiman Asy'ad as-Sijistani, 1990).

While implementing this habituation, educators occasionally encounter challenges such as children's unwillingness to participate or lack of focus. However, teachers at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten address these issues with patience and empathy—avoiding harshness and instead offering consistent encouragement. This gentle approach proves more effective in fostering voluntary participation, as children are gradually motivated to engage in prayer activities on their own initiative. Such positive reinforcement is aligned with developmental principles that emphasize the importance of joyful and supportive learning environments in early childhood.

Conclusion

Based on the observation results of the habituation method applied at Al-Hasanah Plus Kindergarten Purwakarta, it can be concluded that the consistent implementation of this method by educators has effectively instilled prayer values in early childhood. The children are now able to recognize prayer rituals, recite prayer readings, perform correct prayer movements, and understand the spiritual benefits of worship, especially through the congregational *Dhuḥā* prayer sessions held regularly every Monday to Thursday.

The habituation method, consistently practiced for the past three years, proves to be an effective approach to embedding prayer values in young children. This effectiveness is supported by educators' testimonies and observations indicating a significant transformation—from children previously unfamiliar with prayer to those capable of performing it properly, both in terms of physical movements and verbal recitations. This process shows that religious character building through habituation is not only possible but also impactful when done with commitment and consistency from an early age.

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