

A Habit-Based Learning Model to Develop Discipline and Religious Values from an Early Age

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze the application of a habit-based learning model to foster discipline and religious values in early childhood. The habit-based learning model is an approach that emphasizes the consistent and structured repetition of positive behaviors in daily activities within the school environment. This study employed a qualitative approach with descriptive study methods, conducted in an early childhood education institution. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis utilized data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. The results indicate that the routine implementation of habit-based learning, such as group prayer, greetings, queuing, maintaining cleanliness, and time discipline, is effective in fostering discipline and instilling religious values from an early age. Teachers' exemplary behavior, consistent rules, and support from the school and family environment are key contributing factors to the success of this model. Thus, the habit-based learning model has proven to be a relevant and effective strategy for building the foundation of character and spirituality in children from an early age.

Keywords: Habit-Based Learning, Discipline, Religious Values.

I. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation for shaping an individual's character, personality, and value system in later life. During this developmental phase, children experience what is commonly referred to as the "golden age," a period characterized by rapid growth across cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual domains (Nurhadi et al., 2023). The early formation of discipline and religious values is therefore essential, as it provides young children with behavioral guidelines that support moral development and social functioning. Children in this stage are particularly receptive to structured routines and modeling of appropriate behaviors, making it a critical period for the introduction and reinforcement of ethical and spiritual norms (Rahmah & Putri, 2022). Within the national educational context, character education has become a strategic priority, as reflected in policies promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia through programs such as the "Strengthening Character Education" initiative (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2021). These policies emphasize the integration of moral, social, and religious values into early learning environments to nurture holistic development. Furthermore, the concept of character education aligns closely with Islamic principles, which stress the importance of discipline, responsibility, and habitual engagement in virtuous actions as outlined in the Quran (Syafitri & Harefa, 2020). Consequently, instilling discipline and religious values in young children is not only a societal necessity but also a spiritual imperative.

Despite these imperatives, field observations indicate that many children still exhibit challenges in demonstrating disciplined behavior. Common issues include difficulty following rules, inconsistency in practicing religious rituals, and limited responsibility for completing simple tasks (Yuliani et al., 2022). These gaps are often influenced by insufficiently structured routines both at home and in early learning institutions. Educational approaches that focus solely on cognitive instruction without consistent practical reinforcement tend to be less effective in fostering internalized character traits (Putri & Nugroho, 2021). Research has demonstrated that consistent practice and repetition are crucial for the stabilization of prosocial behaviors, indicating the importance of educational models that integrate daily routines with value-based guidance (Astuti & Wati, 2023). Habit-based learning models have emerged as a promising pedagogical approach to address these challenges. Such models emphasize repeated practice, adult modeling, and consistency in applying positive values, allowing children to internalize desired behaviors gradually (Harefa et al., 2022). For example, routine activities such as praying before and after learning sessions, orderly queuing, maintaining cleanliness, and performing religious practices regularly contribute to the formation of enduring habits. Through structured repetition and guided participation, children develop self-regulation, moral reasoning, and social competence, which are foundational for long-term character development (Rizki & Putra, 2021).

The integration of religious and moral education in early childhood is further supported by international research highlighting the benefits of value-based habitual practices. Studies in diverse cultural contexts suggest that habit formation during early childhood enhances self-discipline, prosocial behavior, and the internalization of ethical principles (OECD, 2020; Smith et al., 2021). These findings reinforce the notion that combining structured routines with moral and spiritual content produces measurable improvements in both behavior and value comprehension. Additionally, educational programs that embed religious activities and ethical instruction within daily routines have been shown to increase children's attention, engagement, and motivation in learning (Rahmawati & Nugroho, 2023). In practice, habit-based learning involves creating predictable and supportive classroom environments where positive behaviors are consistently modeled and reinforced. For example, teachers may use visual cues, verbal reminders, and role-playing exercises to encourage children to perform tasks with care, respect, and persistence. Over time, these repeated experiences foster an internalized sense of discipline and ethical understanding, which extends beyond the classroom into the child's broader social interactions (Sari & Hidayat, 2022). Research also indicates that children who participate in structured habit-based programs exhibit higher levels of self-control, empathy, and cooperative behavior, supporting their overall social-emotional development (Nurhadi et al., 2023).

Developing a habit-based learning model is thus a strategic solution for nurturing discipline and religious values from an early age. The model aims not only to raise children's awareness of rules and social norms but also to help them internalize religious principles, making them integral to daily conduct. By fostering self-regulation and spiritual awareness, habit-based learning contributes to comprehensive character development, aligning with the objectives of national education programs and international best practices in early childhood pedagogy (Putra & Harefa, 2022). Given these considerations, it is crucial to examine how habit-based learning can be effectively implemented to cultivate discipline and religious values among young learners. A systematic investigation into this approach can provide valuable insights for educators, caregivers, and policymakers, guiding the development of sustainable and culturally relevant strategies that strengthen early character education (Syafitri et al., 2022). Such research is especially important in the context of Indonesia, where moral and spiritual education is integral to broader educational goals, and where early interventions can lay the groundwork for lifelong ethical behavior and social responsibility.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the implementation and impact of habit-based learning models in fostering discipline and religious values in early childhood. Specifically, the research aims to analyze how structured, repetitive activities influence children's ability to follow rules, demonstrate responsibility, and internalize religious teachings. By addressing gaps in both national and international literature, this study intends to contribute empirical evidence on the effectiveness of habit-based pedagogy in character formation and spiritual development during the formative years (Rahmah & Astuti, 2023; Putri & Harefa, 2021). The primary objective of this study is to develop and evaluate a habit-based learning model that effectively

promotes discipline and religious values in early childhood. By assessing the model's impact on children's behavioral patterns, moral awareness, and religious engagement, the research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for integrating habit-based practices into early education curricula. Ultimately, this study aims to support the development of a generation of children who are not only disciplined and morally aware but also spiritually grounded, contributing to the cultivation of ethical, responsible, and well-rounded future citizens (Astuti & Wati, 2023; OECD, 2020).

II. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to structured efforts aimed at guiding children from birth to six years old by providing educational stimuli that support both physical and spiritual development, ultimately preparing children for further formal education (Harefa et al., 2025). This developmental stage is marked by rapid cognitive, emotional, and social growth, making it critical to instill character values, including discipline and religious awareness, systematically and continuously. Character education at this stage serves as a foundation for personality formation, which significantly influences children's behavior and social interactions later in life (Astuti & Yafie, 2023). National and international studies consistently highlight that early exposure to structured educational activities not only enhances cognitive and motor development but also facilitates the internalization of ethical and moral principles (Nuryanti & Wati, 2025).

2.2 Habit-Based Learning Models

Habit-based learning is the process of forming behavior through repeated and consistent activities over time until they become internalized habits (Putri & Aisyah, 2025). In educational contexts, this model emphasizes practical engagement and repetition of positive behaviors in daily school activities. Theoretically, the concept of habit formation aligns with behaviorist principles articulated by B.F. Skinner, which assert that behavior can be shaped through stimuli and reinforcement (Norhalimah & Nugroho, 2026). Similarly, Albert Bandura's social learning theory underlines that children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation of role models in their environment (Sukmakarti, 2024). Therefore, consistent reinforcement of routines by teachers and the school environment can foster patterns of discipline and religiosity among children (Surya & Pratiwi, 2024). In practice, habit-based learning is implemented through routine activities such as praying before and after lessons, greeting peers and teachers, queuing, following classroom rules, and maintaining personal hygiene (Rizka & Sunarti, 2024). These activities not only cultivate habitual behaviors but also concretely instill moral and spiritual values, highlighting the dual educational function of habit formation in early childhood settings (Ningtyas & Hasibuan, 2023).

2.3 Concept of Discipline in Early Childhood

Discipline in early childhood is understood as a child's ability to adhere to rules and norms consciously and responsibly. Discipline extends beyond mere obedience motivated by fear of punishment; it represents an internalized awareness developed through learning and habitual practice (Krisnawati, 2025). The development of discipline in young children should be approached positively and educationally. Teachers serve as facilitators and role models by implementing clear, consistent rules appropriate to children's developmental stages (Juwita et al., 2026). A structured and supportive learning environment helps children comprehend boundaries and responsibilities, fostering self-regulation and cooperative behavior (Otoluwa et al., 2020).

2.4 Religious Values in Early Childhood

Religious values in early childhood encompass the introduction and habituation of behaviors reflecting religious teachings, such as praying, honesty, helping others, respecting others, and demonstrating gratitude (Abidah & Wiranti, 2025). Early cultivation of religious values is crucial for forming children's spiritual and moral character. In Indonesia, strengthening religious values aligns with national education objectives formulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, which aim to develop students who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty and possess noble character (Harefa et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of religious values into learning activities constitutes a significant component of the ECE curriculum.

2.5 Relationship Between Habit-Based Learning and the Development of Discipline and Religious Values

Habit-based learning models are closely linked to the cultivation of discipline and religious values. Through consistent and routine engagement in specific activities, children gradually become accustomed to following rules and practicing religious behaviors in daily life (Putri & Aisyah, 2025). This process facilitates the internalization of values, wherein disciplined and religious behaviors transition from external directives to intrinsic character traits (Sukmakarti, 2024). Research in both national and international contexts supports the notion that structured habit formation within ECE not only enhances behavioral regulation but also reinforces moral and spiritual development, demonstrating its holistic impact on early childhood growth (Astuti & Yafie, 2023; Nuryanti & Wati, 2025). In summary, the integration of habit-based learning models within early childhood education provides a systematic approach to fostering discipline and religious values. By combining theoretical insights from behaviorism and social learning with practical classroom routines, educators can effectively guide children toward internalizing positive behavioral and moral habits, laying the foundation for well-rounded development and lifelong learning (Norhalimah & Nugroho, 2026; Surya & Pratiwi, 2024).

III. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The CAR approach was chosen to improve and enhance the learning process through the implementation of habit-based learning models aimed at fostering discipline and religious values in early childhood. The subjects of the study were children aged 5–6 years old in group B, with a total of 10–15 students in a single class. The research was conducted at TK Tunas Harapan during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study spanned approximately two months and was carried out in cycles, with each cycle comprising four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the researcher prepared the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH), established indicators for discipline and religious values, designed daily habituation activities, and prepared observation and documentation instruments.

During the action implementation stage, discipline practices included arriving on time, queuing orderly, submitting assignments punctually, and completing tasks on schedule, while religious habituation activities involved praying before and after activities, greeting appropriately, reciting daily prayers, demonstrating politeness and honesty, and sharing with peers. The observation stage focused on changes in children's discipline, consistency in practicing religious values, and their responses to the habituation activities. Reflection involved analyzing observational results, evaluating shortcomings from the previous cycle, and planning improvements for the next cycle. Data were collected through multiple techniques, including direct observation of daily activities, interviews with the principal and teachers regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the habit-based learning model, and documentation of materials such as RPPs, daily activity schedules, photos, and children's progress records. Data analysis followed a systematic process, starting with data reduction to select relevant information aligned with research objectives, followed by data presentation in descriptive narrative form for clarity, and concluded with drawing

conclusions and verification by identifying patterns and relationships observed in the field. The research flow can be seen in the image:



Figure 1. Research Design

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

a. Planning of Habit-Based Learning Model

The teacher designed habituation activities in an integrated manner within the daily and weekly program. These activities included praying before and after learning, greeting others politely, reciting short prayers, queuing orderly, tidying up play materials, and adhering to classroom rules. This planning was documented in the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) and aligned with indicators for the development of religious and moral values.

b. Implementation of Habituation in Daily Activities

The habituation activities were carried out consistently and repeatedly each day. The teacher provided direct modeling and positive reinforcement when children demonstrated disciplined and religious behavior. The children gradually became accustomed to arriving on time, following classroom rules, and reminding their peers to pray before starting activities.

c. Development of Children's Discipline

Observations indicated an increase in discipline, such as the children being able to wait their turn, complete tasks on time, and follow classroom rules without repeated reminders. They also demonstrated responsibility by tidying up learning materials after use.

d. Development of Children's Religious Values

Children began to show self-initiated prayer habits, greet teachers respectfully, and exhibit polite and helpful behaviors. Religious values were evident not only in ritual activities but also in daily conduct, such as honesty and sharing with friends.

e. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting factors included teacher consistency, the principal's support, and parental involvement in continuing habituation at home. Inhibiting factors involved differences in family backgrounds and the lack of consistency among some parents in applying habituation practices in the home environment.

Table 1. Observation Data on the Development of Discipline and Religious Values

| No | Child Initial | Discipline (Pre) | Discipline (Post) | Religious Values (Pre) | Religious Values (Post) | Development Category |
|----|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | PT | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 2 | KZ | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 3 | AF | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 4 | BR | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 5 | NB | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 6 | AN | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 7 | SK | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 8 | JN | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 9 | AH | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 10 | MS | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 11 | AZ | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 12 | RW | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | Very Good Development |
| 13 | AB | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 14 | RQ | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | Development as Expected |
| 15 | DT | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | Very Good Development |

Table 2. Scoring Scale (Early Childhood Development Observation)

| Score | Criteria |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Not Yet Developed (NYD) |
| 2 | Beginning to Develop (BD) |
| 3 | Developing as Expected (DAE) |
| 4 | Very Good Development (VGD) |

Assessment Indicators

- a. Discipline
 - 1. Arriving on time
 - 2. Following classroom rules
 - 3. Tidying up play materials after use
 - 4. Queuing orderly
- b. Religious Values
 - 1. Reciting prayers before and after activities
 - 2. Participating in communal worship activities
 - 3. Greeting appropriately
 - 4. Demonstrating politeness and respect

4.2. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that habit-based learning models are highly effective in fostering discipline and religious values in early childhood. These findings are consistent with behaviorist theory as articulated by B.F. Skinner, which emphasizes that behavior can be shaped through repetition and reinforcement (Skinner, 1953; Norhalimah & Nugroho, 2026). By implementing consistent routines and reinforcing positive actions, children gradually internalize disciplined behaviors, which then become habitual. Previous studies in early childhood education corroborate that repeated practice, combined with positive reinforcement, significantly enhances self-regulation and adherence to rules among preschool children (Harefa et al., 2025; Astuti & Yafie, 2023). Behaviorism provides a theoretical framework for understanding how

structured habit formation can modify observable behavior. According to Skinner, reinforcement—whether positive (rewarding desired behavior) or negative (removing an aversive stimulus)—serves as a powerful mechanism for promoting behavioral consistency. In the context of early childhood classrooms, teachers who systematically apply reinforcement strategies, such as praise, encouragement, or tangible rewards, create conditions that encourage children to comply with classroom norms and exhibit responsible behaviors (Syarifainy et al., 2022). The habit-based learning model operationalizes this theory by embedding structured routines within daily activities, such as queuing, attending to hygiene, or following classroom rules, which gradually shape children's moral and ethical behavior.

In addition to the behaviorist principles of reinforcement and social learning theory discussed earlier, external factors such as the shift to distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic played a crucial role in shaping children's behavior. Research conducted at SMAN 15 Bulukumba found that while students' independence increased, their discipline and politeness decreased after engaging in distance learning (Hajar & Sabir, 2023). This illustrates how significant changes in the learning environment can affect the internalization of values such as discipline, a key component of the habit-based learning model. This study emphasizes that while the habit-based model supports the formation of disciplined behavior through consistent routines, the implementation of such models must be resilient to disruptions like those caused by distance learning. Therefore, maintaining structured routines in both school and home settings is essential to ensure the continued development of character, especially during times of educational change.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that engaging children in religious practices, such as praying, greeting others respectfully, and showing courteous behavior, facilitates the internalization of religious values through direct experience rather than verbal instruction alone. These activities provide children with tangible contexts in which to understand the meaning and purpose of moral and religious behaviors, reinforcing the link between action and ethical understanding (Utaminityas & Zulkarnaen, 2024). Research in Indonesian early childhood settings supports this perspective, showing that children exposed to structured religious activities exhibit higher levels of prosocial behavior, moral reasoning, and spiritual awareness compared to peers with minimal ritual exposure (Nuryanti & Wati, 2025). Similarly, international studies in early childhood religious education have found that experiential learning, including participation in structured rituals and guided reflection, significantly enhances young children's comprehension of religious principles and moral reasoning skills (Juwita et al., 2026; Abidah & Wiranti, 2025).

The effectiveness of habit-based learning models is, however, strongly influenced by the consistency of implementation both at school and at home. Collaboration between teachers and parents is critical to reinforcing desired behaviors and ensuring the continuity of value-based routines beyond the classroom (Harefa et al., 2025). Family engagement acts as a reinforcement mechanism, extending learning and habituation into the child's natural environment. Without parental support, internalization of both discipline and religious values may be incomplete, limiting the long-term effectiveness of school-based interventions (Krisnawati, 2025). Studies in Indonesia indicate that children whose families actively participate in reinforcing school-based routines demonstrate stronger self-discipline, higher ethical awareness, and more consistent religious practice (Ningtyas & Hasibuan, 2023). International evidence similarly underscores the significance of home-school synergy, noting that consistent modeling of ethical and religious behaviors by both educators and parents amplifies children's moral development (Otoluwa et al., 2020). Factors that support or hinder the development of religious discipline and values in school must also be reinforced at home (Suarlin et al, 2021).

Moreover, habit-based learning models have been shown to foster holistic character development in early childhood. By combining repeated practice, observational learning, and experiential engagement, children not only acquire discipline and religious knowledge but also develop critical social skills, self-regulation, and interpersonal competence (Astuti & Yafie, 2023). This is particularly relevant in the formative years, as these competencies serve as foundational elements for later academic achievement, social adaptation, and ethical decision-making (Putri & Aisyah, 2025; Surya & Pratiwi, 2024). The structured nature of habit-based learning aligns with the developmental characteristics of young children, who thrive in

predictable, supportive, and scaffolded learning environments that provide clear examples of acceptable behavior and repeated opportunities to practice them (Syarifainy et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the findings of this study substantiate the effectiveness of habit-based learning models in promoting early childhood discipline and religious values. The integration of behavioral reinforcement (Skinner) and observational learning (Bandura) provides a robust theoretical underpinning for implementing such models in preschools. Consistent application, teacher modeling, and family collaboration are critical success factors, ensuring that these practices become internalized rather than externally imposed. This approach not only enhances moral and religious development but also cultivates disciplined, socially aware, and morally conscious children, ready for further education and responsible citizenship. Overall, habit-based learning represents a theoretically sound, empirically supported, and practically applicable framework for nurturing character and religious values in early childhood education settings.

V. Conclusion

The habituation-based learning model is an effective approach for fostering discipline and religious values from an early age. Through activities carried out routinely and consistently, children can develop positive habits that are embedded in their daily behavior. Habits such as praying before and after activities, being orderly, respecting time, and demonstrating behavior aligned with religious values help children understand and practice moral teachings in a tangible way. With the support of teachers and a conducive learning environment, this model can shape children's character to be disciplined, responsible, and grounded in strong religious principles from the early stages of development. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that teachers consistently implement the habituation-based learning model to foster discipline and religious values in children, ensuring that these practices become an integral part of daily routines. Schools are encouraged to develop structured habituation programs that actively involve parents, creating a strong synergy between home and school environments. In addition, parents should serve as role models by demonstrating disciplined behavior and upholding religious values, while also guiding and supporting their children in daily habituation activities. Furthermore, future research is suggested to explore more creative approaches to habituation and to conduct long-term evaluations of their effectiveness in developing children's character and moral foundations.

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