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Teacher Strategies for Developing Religious Character through Short Surah Memorization in an Integrated Islamic Kindergarten

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Abstract

This study examines teacher strategies for developing religious character through short-surah memorization in an integrated Islamic kindergarten. Although short-surah memorization is widely practiced in early childhood Islamic education, limited research has examined how teachers integrate this activity into religious character formation. This study investigates instructional strategies, supporting factors, and implementation challenges. A qualitative case-study approach was conducted at Bumi Bahari Pering Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, involving four classroom teachers, one principal, and twenty children as participants. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations over three months, and documentation analysis, then analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that religious character development was strengthened through three strategies: enjoyable multisensory learning integrating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic stimulation; differentiated instruction adapted to children's developmental and learning characteristics; and sustained teacher-parent collaboration. Classroom observations showed that repeated recitation, teacher modeling, positive reinforcement, and integration of memorized surahs into daily religious routines encouraged more consistent behavioral expressions. Children demonstrated improved discipline in following classroom routines, greater politeness in interactions, confidence when reciting independently, stronger empathy toward peers, and more active participation in collective religious practices. The findings also reveal that teachers adjusted repetition frequency, learning pace, and instructional assistance according to abilities. Nevertheless, differences in children's memorization capacities, concentration levels, and parental involvement created challenges requiring support and communication. Overall, short-surah memorization can function beyond cognitive learning as a pedagogical medium for religious character development when embedded in enjoyable instruction, consistent modeling, individualized support, and coordinated school-family engagement.

KEYWORDS

islamic education; religious character; short surah memorization; teacher strategies.

Introduction

Early childhood education fundamentally constitutes a structured approach designed to nurture and stimulate young children in order to achieve more comprehensive developmental outcomes during their formative years, with an emphasis on the holistic development of each child's unique personality. As a guiding figure in early childhood settings, educators are required to possess essential competencies to understand the complex trajectory of child development (Dahlia, 2025).

Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding and educating learners across various levels of education. Their function extends beyond merely transmitting knowledge; they act as facilitators of learning, mentors, and role models for students. Teachers are responsible for delivering instructional content in ways that are both comprehensible and engaging (Romdon et al., 2024). To this end, they employ diverse pedagogical methods and

learning resources to support students' understanding of conceptual material. Moreover, teachers are actively involved in accompanying students throughout their learning processes, providing guidance and support in overcoming learning difficulties and achieving their full potential (Dahlia, 2025). As exemplars of behavior and attitude, teachers demonstrate strong work ethics, integrity, and other positive values expected to be emulated by students. Through the effective enactment of these roles, teachers contribute to the formation of educated, skilled, and competitive generations while fostering the optimal development of each learner (Nugroho, 2018).

Early childhood education (ECE) serves as a critical foundation for character formation, including the development of religious character. At this stage, children are in the "golden age," characterized by a heightened क्षमता to absorb values and habits rapidly (Ningsih & Wiyani, 2024). Therefore, the role of teachers in implementing effective learning strategies is crucial for instilling religious values from an early age. One commonly applied method in Islamic educational institutions is the memorization of short Qur'anic surahs, which not only aims to enhance children's cognitive abilities but also fosters religious character traits such as discipline, responsibility, and piety (Atika & Perdina, 2025).

According to Alwisol, character is defined as a pattern of behavior that reflects moral distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, both explicitly and implicitly. Character, as a set of positive values encompassing awareness of goodness, willingness to act virtuously, actualization of good behavior, and positive impact on the environment is internalized within individuals and manifested through their actions. Thus, the concept of character is closely associated with personality; an individual is considered to possess character when their behavior aligns with established moral norms (Latifah, 2023).

Character formation during early childhood is of paramount importance, as moral values and virtuous principles are more readily instilled in young children compared to older individuals. This is due to the high receptivity of early childhood and their relative resilience to negative influences arising from conflicting cultural dynamics (Yuliana & Fadlillah, 2021). Early childhood education encompasses fundamental learning experiences provided to children aged 0–6 years, designed to offer guided stimulation that supports both physical and spiritual growth, thereby preparing them for subsequent educational endeavors.

Religious value-based character education is grounded in divine revelation and moral preservation (Rizka & Yeniningsih, 2024). Its primary objective is to cultivate individuals who are morally upright and civilized. According to Adian Husaini, a virtuous and civilized person is one who recognizes their Creator, understands themselves and their inherent potential, emulates the Prophet as a model of exemplary conduct (uswatun hasanah), and follows the guidance of the Prophet's inheritors (ulama) (Musarofah, 2023).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of Qur'anic memorization and habituation practices in fostering religious development among young children. Several studies have demonstrated that short-surah memorization activities can improve children's familiarity with Islamic teachings, strengthen religious routines, and enhance discipline and moral behavior. For example, (Lestari, 2024) reported that the habituation of short-surah memorization in an Islamic kindergarten promoted discipline through structured repetition, reinforcement, and teacher modeling. Similarly, (Hanafi et al., 2021) found that children participating in Qur'anic memorization programs achieved higher scores in religious-moral development than those who did not participate.

Other studies have examined religious habituation more

broadly. (Shobicha, 2025) identified various school-based religious activities, including Qur'anic literacy and prayer routines, as important mechanisms for strengthening religious character. Meanwhile, (Faquihuddin, 2024) emphasized the effectiveness of multisensory learning approaches and parental involvement in improving children's engagement and retention during Qur'an memorization activities. Furthermore, studies on religious character education have consistently highlighted the importance of teacher modeling, classroom routines, and family support in shaping children's religious behavior (Hadi, 2025; Ya'cub, 2026).

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to examine Qur'anic memorization, religious habituation, and character formation as separate areas of inquiry. Existing research predominantly focuses on educational outcomes, such as memorization achievement, developmental progress, discipline, or religious attitudes, while paying limited attention to the pedagogical processes through which these outcomes are achieved. More specifically, little is known about how teachers strategically integrate memorization activities with character-building objectives through adaptive instructional practices. Previous studies have rarely investigated the combined role of multisensory learning, differentiated instruction tailored to children's developmental characteristics, and sustained school–family collaboration within a unified framework of religious character formation. In addition, the practical challenges faced by teachers in implementing and maintaining such approaches in everyday classroom settings remain insufficiently explored.

To address these limitations, this study investigates teacher strategies for developing religious character through short-surah memorization at TK Islam Terpadu Pering using an in-depth qualitative case-study approach. Unlike previous studies that primarily measured learning outcomes or examined habituation programs in general, this research focuses on the instructional processes underlying religious character formation. By analyzing the interaction between teacher strategies, supporting factors, implementation challenges, and observable behavioral outcomes, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how short-surah memorization can be transformed from a routine memorization activity into an intentional pedagogical strategy for cultivating religious character in early childhood Islamic education.

Teacher strategy refers to a systematic set of plans, approaches, methods, and techniques designed and implemented by educators to achieve learning objectives effectively and efficiently. This includes the selection of instructional materials, utilization of learning media, classroom management, student interaction, and evaluation of learning outcomes (Fauziah, 2023). Within the context of early childhood education, teaching strategies must be aligned with children's developmental characteristics, such as learning through play, engaging activities, and concrete approaches. Effective strategies should not only focus on cognitive development but also promote moral, social, emotional, and religious values (Zulfikar et al., 2024).

In practice, several challenges are encountered in the learning process. Young children tend to experience boredom when memorization activities are monotonous, relying solely on repetitive techniques. There is often a lack of teacher creativity in presenting memorization activities in engaging forms, such as through songs, movements, or games. Additionally, some children face difficulties in accurately pronouncing Arabic verses due to insufficient intensive guidance. Teachers frequently rely on conventional methods such as uniform, classical memorization without variation which are less effective in fostering religious values. Furthermore, not all educators possess a comprehensive understanding of early childhood psychology, leading to the implementation of

strategies that are not fully aligned with students' developmental needs. The limited use of instructional media, such as flashcards, animated videos, or visual aids, also constrains the memorization process.

This study is significant in the context of contemporary society, where the early development of religious character plays an important role in helping children internalize positive values and behaviors. While previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of Qur'anic memorization, religious habituation, parental involvement, and teacher modeling for children's religious development, these factors have generally been examined separately. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how teachers integrate these elements into a coherent pedagogical strategy that links short-surah memorization with the development of observable religious character in early childhood.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of teacher strategies within the specific context of an integrated Islamic kindergarten. Unlike previous research that primarily focused on memorization outcomes, discipline, or general religious habituation programs, this study investigates how teachers combine multisensory learning approaches, differentiated instruction, routine religious practices, teacher modeling, and school-family collaboration to support religious character formation. In addition, the study extends existing knowledge by examining not only instructional strategies but also the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence implementation, including children's age, individual personality traits, psychological readiness, learning characteristics, and family background. By focusing on observable behavioral indicators such as discipline, politeness, self-confidence, empathy, and participation in religious activities, this study provides a more holistic understanding of the relationship between short-surah memorization and religious character development in early childhood.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What strategies do teachers employ to develop religious character through the habituation of short-surah memorization at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering? (2) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence the implementation of these strategies? and (3) How are the outcomes of religious character development reflected in children's observable behaviors? Based on these questions, the study aims to analyze teacher strategies, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and examine the behavioral manifestations of religious character resulting from the habituation of short-surah memorization at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering.

Methods

Research Site and Duration

The study was conducted at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering, Bunguran Timur District, Natuna Regency, Indonesia. The institution was selected because it systematically implements short-surah memorization as an integral component of its religious character education program. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period, from March to May 2025. During this period, the researcher carried out eight classroom observation sessions focusing on the implementation of short-surah memorization activities and students' participation in the learning process. Each observation session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was conducted during regular instructional hours. In addition, semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators, as well as document reviews of lesson plans, memorization records, and school programs, were undertaken throughout the fieldwork period to obtain comprehensive and triangulated data regarding the

implementation of the program.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of short-surah memorization activities and religious character education.

The informants consisted of:

1. 1 classroom teacher (Normayunita) who was directly responsible for implementing short-surah memorization activities;
2. 1 school principal (Endah Rahayu Martinah Yulianti) who was responsible for curriculum implementation and institutional policies;
3. participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in short-surah memorization activities and religious character education, consisting of one classroom teacher, one school principal, and twenty children aged 4–6 years at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering. The teacher and principal were chosen because of their active roles in implementing and supervising the memorization program, while the children regularly participated in memorization activities and classroom observations. Although parents were not interviewed, their involvement was documented through home memorization monitoring sheets, parent-teacher communication records, and school documents to examine the continuity of memorization practices between school and home environments. The inclusion criteria for teachers were: (1) actively teaching at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering, (2) directly involved in implementing short-surah memorization activities, and (3) willing to participate in the study. The principal was selected because of her responsibility for supervising educational programs and religious character development initiatives within the institution. Participant selection was guided by the principle of information richness, whereby individuals possessing direct experience and knowledge of the memorization program were prioritized as key informants. Data collection continued until sufficient information was obtained to address the research objectives and no substantially new themes emerged from the collected data.

Observation

Classroom observations were conducted during short-surah memorization activities involving children aged 4–6 years at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering. A total of eight observation sessions were conducted between March and May 2025 during regular instructional hours. Each observation session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. The observations were carried out in both lower-level classes (4–5 years) and upper-level classes (5–6 years) to capture differences in children's developmental characteristics and learning responses. The observed activities included morning memorization routines, group recitation sessions, individual memorization assessments, teacher-guided repetition, movement- and song-based memorization activities, and closing reflection sessions. The observations focused on: (1) the implementation of short-surah memorization activities; (2) teacher-student interactions; (3) the use of instructional methods and learning media; (4) reinforcement and reward strategies; and (5) children's behavioral responses and indicators of religious character, including discipline, politeness, responsibility, and participation in religious activities. Field notes were recorded immediately after each observation session using a structured observation format consisting of descriptive notes, teacher actions, student responses, and reflective comments. The observation records were subsequently organized according to recurring themes and compared with interview transcripts and school documents

during the thematic analysis process to enhance data credibility through triangulation.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher (Normayunita) and the school principal (Endah Rahayu Martinah Yulianti). Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent.

The interview protocol covered four major themes:

1. Teacher strategies used in memorization activities;
2. Perceived effects on children's religious character;
3. Supporting and inhibiting factors;
4. Collaboration between school and families.

Examples of interview questions included:

1. "How do you introduce and reinforce short-surah memorization among children?"
2. "What strategies are used when children experience difficulties memorizing surahs?"
3. "What changes in children's religious behavior have you observed?"
4. "How does the school encourage parental involvement in memorization activities at home?"
5. "What challenges do teachers encounter during implementation?"

Triangulation

Method triangulation was conducted by comparing findings obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from the classroom teacher, the school principal, classroom observations, and institutional documents to identify consistency and credibility across data sources. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several additional strategies were employed. Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to the classroom teacher and the school principal to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. Peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with fellow researchers and academic colleagues to evaluate coding decisions, thematic interpretations, and potential researcher bias. An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, including field notes, interview transcripts, observation records, coding sheets, analytical memos, and documentation records. These materials provided a transparent record of data collection and analysis procedures. Furthermore, the coding process was reviewed repeatedly to ensure consistency between emerging themes and the original data sources. The integration of triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, audit trail documentation, and code review strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

Ethical Approval

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including teachers and the school principal. For student participants, consent was secured from their parents or guardians. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and all data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this qualitative case study indicate that teachers' strategies in fostering religious character through the habituation of short-surah memorization at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering appeared to be multidimensional and contextually adaptive. Data were obtained through eight

classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher and the principal, and the analysis of institutional documents, including memorization monitoring sheets, teacher reflection notes, and parent communication records. Thematic analysis identified four major themes: (1) family background, (2) developmental stage, (3) child personality, and (4) psychological-emotional condition. These themes emerged inductively and were consistently supported through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. For example, the classroom teacher stated, "*Children whose parents repeat the surahs at home usually demonstrate greater confidence during recitation activities*" (Teacher Interview, T1). Observation records further showed that several children who regularly practiced at home required less prompting during classroom recitation sessions. Likewise, teacher reflection notes indicated that children who received additional emotional support gradually became more willing to participate in memorization activities. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific associations observed within the learning environment rather than direct causal effects on children's religious character development.

Family Influence on Religious Character Formation

The findings suggest that family involvement appeared to be associated with children's memorization consistency and participation in religious activities. Teachers frequently reported that children who regularly practiced short surahs at home tended to demonstrate greater fluency during classroom recitation sessions. One teacher explained: "*Children whose parents repeat the surahs with them at home usually come to school already remembering the verses. They are more confident when asked to recite in front of the class*" (Teacher Interview, T1). Similarly, the principal noted: "*Parental support, especially from mothers who accompany children before bedtime or after prayer, seems to help maintain memorization habits outside school*" (Principal Interview, P1). Classroom observations supported these statements. During a memorization session, several children who were identified by teachers as receiving regular home support completed recitation tasks with minimal prompting, while some children required repeated guidance from the teacher before continuing the verses. Document analysis further reinforced this pattern. Memorization monitoring sheets showed that children whose parents consistently completed home-practice records generally demonstrated more stable memorization progress across the semester. However, the findings also indicate that family background was not the sole determinant of success. Teachers reported several cases in which children with limited parental assistance gradually improved through repeated classroom practice and individualized support. Therefore, family involvement appeared to contribute positively to memorization habituation, although school-based interventions also played an important role in supporting children's development.

Developmental Stage and Cognitive Readiness

Age-related developmental differences emerged as an important factor in the implementation of memorization activities. Teachers adapted instructional strategies according to children's cognitive and language development levels. One teacher stated: "*For younger children, memorization cannot be separated from play. We usually combine surahs with songs, body movements, and simple games. Older children can focus longer and repeat verses independently*" (Teacher Interview, T2). Observational data confirmed this distinction. In classes consisting of children aged 4–5 years, memorization activities were frequently accompanied by rhythmic chanting, hand gestures, and movement-based games. Children responded enthusiastically and remained engaged throughout the activity. In contrast, children aged 5–6 years participated in more

structured recitation sessions, including individual memorization checks and peer-assisted repetition. School lesson plans also documented differentiated instructional approaches for different age groups. The lower-level curriculum emphasized play-based memorization, while upper-level classes incorporated individual recitation assessments and independent practice. These findings suggest that developmentally appropriate strategies supported children's engagement and appeared to facilitate memorization retention.

Personality-Based Learning Adaptation

Another theme emerging from the data was the diversity of children's learning preferences associated with personality characteristics. Teachers described noticeable differences between children who were comfortable participating in group activities and those who preferred quieter learning situations. According to one teacher: *"Some children immediately volunteer to recite in front of their friends, while others know the surah well but prefer to recite individually to the teacher"* (Teacher Interview, T3). Classroom observations provided examples of this variation. During group recitation sessions, several children actively led the chanting process and encouraged peers to participate. Conversely, some children remained silent during group activities but demonstrated accurate memorization when assessed individually. To accommodate these differences, teachers organized learning environments into multiple activity formats, including whole-class recitation, small-group practice, and individual memorization sessions. Observation records indicated that children who initially hesitated to participate became more engaged when given opportunities to practice in settings aligned with their comfort levels. Documentation from weekly teacher reflection notes further showed that flexible instructional arrangements helped increase participation among children with varying personality characteristics.

Psychological and Emotional Conditions

The findings also indicate that children's emotional states appeared to influence memorization performance. Teachers frequently observed that anxiety, fatigue, or low self-confidence affected children's ability to recall memorized verses. One teacher explained: *"Sometimes a child can recite perfectly during practice, but when asked to perform in front of others, they suddenly forget part of the surah because they become nervous"* (Teacher Interview, T4). This observation was confirmed during classroom visits. In several cases, children paused during recitation despite having successfully completed the same material earlier in smaller learning groups. Teachers responded by providing encouragement and allowing children to continue at their own pace. To reduce emotional pressure, teachers implemented supportive classroom practices. These included positive verbal reinforcement, allowing children to practice with peers before individual recitation, and creating a non-judgmental learning atmosphere. As described by the principal: *"We emphasize appreciation for effort rather than perfection. Children should feel safe when learning and making mistakes"* (Principal Interview, P2). Teacher reflection documents indicated that children gradually showed greater willingness to participate in memorization activities after receiving consistent encouragement and emotional support.

Core Teacher Strategies in Religious Character Formation

Across all themes, three principal instructional strategies consistently emerged from the data.

1. Multisensory Learning Approach

Teachers integrated auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements into memorization activities. Songs, picture cards, hand gestures, and movement-based exercises

were frequently used to support learning. Observation records showed that children were more actively involved when memorization activities incorporated multiple sensory experiences compared with conventional repetition alone.

2. Differentiated Instruction

Teachers adjusted learning activities according to age, personality, and individual learning readiness. One teacher remarked: *"Every child learns differently. Some need repetition, some need movement, and some need more personal guidance"* (Teacher Interview, T5). This adaptive approach was consistently documented in lesson plans and classroom observations.

3. School-Parent Collaboration

Teachers maintained regular communication with parents through parenting programs, progress reports, and home memorization monitoring sheets. Document analysis demonstrated that these communication mechanisms facilitated continuity between classroom learning and home practice, supporting the habituation process beyond school hours.

Observable Outcomes of Religious Character Development

The habituation of short-surah memorization was associated not only with improvements in memorization ability but also with several observable indicators of religious character development. The indicators were identified through repeated classroom observations and teacher reports:

1. Discipline was reflected in children's ability to participate consistently in daily memorization routines, arrive on time for religious activities, and follow recitation procedures without frequent reminders.
2. Politeness was observed through respectful interactions with teachers and peers, including greeting practices, listening attentively during recitation sessions, and using courteous language.
3. Responsibility appeared when children prepared memorization tasks independently, completed assigned practice activities, and demonstrated commitment to memorizing designated surahs.
4. Enthusiasm for religious activities was indicated by active participation in recitation sessions, willingness to volunteer for public recitation, and eagerness to join prayer-related activities.

For example, during morning memorization activities, several children voluntarily requested opportunities to lead the recitation, while others reminded peers to participate respectfully. Teachers interpreted these behaviors as evidence of emerging religious values internalized through repeated habituation practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that the habituation of short-surah memorization, when supported by adaptive teaching strategies, parental involvement, and emotionally supportive learning environments, appeared to facilitate religious character development among young children (see Table 1). The convergence of interview data, classroom observations, and documentary evidence suggests that cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions collectively contribute to the effectiveness of character formation practices in early childhood Islamic education settings.

In an insightful exploration of indicators related to religious character, Jalaluddin proposes a conceptual classification into four distinct categories that illuminate the complexity of spirituality. (a) The family factor plays a pivotal role, as the emotional bonds between parents particularly the profound connection between a mother and her child during pregnancy can significantly shape a child's religious tendencies and beliefs as they develop. (b) Age level emerges as a crucial determinant, indicating that children's religious development is closely linked to their specific stages of growth,

Table 1. Summary of Key Qualitative Findings

No	Theme	Supporting Evidence	Educational Implications
1	Family Influence	Interviews, observation records, home memorization monitoring sheets	Strengthen school–parent partnerships
2	Developmental Stage	Classroom observations, lesson plans, teacher interviews	Apply differentiated instruction by age
3	Personality	Observation records, teacher reflections, interviews	Implement flexible and inclusive teaching methods
4	Psychological Condition	Observation records, interviews, teacher documentation	Create supportive and stress-free learning environments
5	Teaching Strategies	Observations, lesson plans, interviews	Integrate holistic pedagogy in early childhood education

Source: Primary Data (Processed, 2025)

which substantially influence their cognitive abilities and perceptions of faith and spirituality. (c) Personality, often regarded as an individual's identity, constitutes another essential aspect, as variations in individual character traits are believed to have a substantial impact on the evolution of religious disposition and how individuals relate to their beliefs. (d) Finally, an individual's psychological condition serves as a fundamental consideration, as one's mental and emotional state can profoundly influence their capacity for faith and overall engagement with religious practices and concepts, thereby enriching the multifaceted discourse on religious character development (Sofyan, 2024b).

Family Factor

The findings indicate that religious character formation through the habituation of short-surah memorization is a multidimensional process influenced by the interaction of family background, developmental readiness, personality characteristics, and children's psychological conditions. Rather than functioning as independent factors, these dimensions appear to interact dynamically in shaping children's engagement with religious learning and the internalization of religious values. The results suggest that memorization habituation becomes most effective when supported by consistent reinforcement across home and school environments, developmentally appropriate instruction, and emotionally supportive learning experiences.

Family background emerged as an important contextual factor associated with children's memorization consistency and participation in religious activities. Children who received regular support from parents, particularly through repeated recitation practices at home, generally demonstrated greater fluency and confidence during classroom memorization sessions. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that parental involvement contributes to children's religious learning by providing continuity between formal and informal educational settings. However, the present study

extends previous research by showing that family support alone does not fully determine learning outcomes. Several children with limited home reinforcement were still able to demonstrate substantial progress through intensive classroom guidance and repeated habituation activities.

This finding offers an important nuance to existing literature. While many studies emphasize parental influence as the primary determinant of children's religious development, the present findings suggest that effective school-based interventions may partially compensate for disparities in family support. This observation highlights the role of teachers not merely as instructors but also as facilitators of religious socialization. The finding may explain why some children from less supportive religious environments were nevertheless able to demonstrate positive character development through consistent exposure to structured religious routines at school.

Based on interviews with teacher Normayunita and the school principal, Endah Rahayu Martinah Yulianti, it was found that the family plays the most fundamental role in shaping early childhood religious character through the habituation of short surah memorization. Teachers emphasized that parental involvement, particularly that of mothers, is a key determinant of children's memorization success. This is reinforced by family practices such as accompanying children in reviewing short surahs before bedtime or after prayer, thereby familiarizing them with an Islamic environment. The principal further noted that the school has implemented parenting programs and memorization progress reports to strengthen collaboration between teachers and parents, ensuring that religious habituation is consistently practiced both at home and at school. These findings are consistent with empirical studies indicating that parenting patterns involving guidance, motivation, and continuous supervision significantly contribute to the formation of religious character in early childhood, although such outcomes are also influenced by parental educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Arnita et al., 2022; Jamil & Mariana, 2024).

Field observations also indicate active family involvement in routine *tahfidz* activities, as reflected in children's ability to repeat recitations in accordance with teachers' instructions, supported by Islamic parenting patterns at home. Parenting activities are formally documented in the school agenda as part of efforts to synergize the roles of teachers and families.

These findings are consistent with Islamic educational theory, which posits that the family serves as the first *madrasah* for children. The role of parents, especially mothers, in shaping behavioral patterns and spirituality is substantial due to the emotional bond established from pregnancy through early childhood. According to Antonio, strategies for religious character formation must involve the family to ensure that Islamic values are internalized holistically through synergy between formal education and home habituation. Thus, the family factor is confirmed as the primary foundation for the successful implementation of short surah memorization in fostering children's religious character.

Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya Ulumuddin*, asserts that the seeds of religious character may indeed be inherited through *fitrah* (the innate human disposition toward divinity). However, he emphasizes that the educational environment can optimize or even transform this natural tendency (Sofyan, 2024a).

Recent empirical studies further reinforce that parents play a crucial role as motivators, role models, and supervisors in children's Qur'anic memorization from the kindergarten level, with consistent home-based guidance creating a conducive environment that enhances children's spiritual discipline (Jamil & Mariana, 2024). Moreover, active parental involvement such as providing motivation, facilitating access to *murottal* media, and maintaining communication with teachers has been shown to significantly improve children's ability to memorize short surahs, contributing up to 50.1% to their learning progress

(Fatikasari & Yusuf, 2025).

In response to this reality, teachers implement differentiated strategies. For children who receive limited religious stimulation at home, additional mentoring is provided for approximately 15 minutes before formal learning begins. The school also developed a memorization communication book containing children's progress records and guidelines for parents to engage with memorization materials at home. Evaluation after three months of implementation showed increased consistency in memorization among previously less motivated children.

Importantly, this approach is not deterministic. Several cases demonstrate that, with appropriate methods, children from less religious family backgrounds can also show significant progress in memorization. This finding indicates that the educational environment can effectively moderate hereditary and environmental influences in shaping religious character. This is supported by cultural perspectives emphasizing that the family, as the primary social institution, plays a central role in internalizing religious values through positive interactions, parental modeling, and the integration of daily worship practices, thereby optimizing children's innate religious disposition despite external cultural influences (Rahim, 2023).

Age Level (Cognitive Development)

Interview findings indicate that children's age significantly influences the habituation of short surah memorization implemented by teachers at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering. Normayunita explained that four-year-old children tend to memorize more effectively through songs and games, whereas six-year-old children are capable of independently repeating recitations with minimal guidance. The principal further emphasized that these age differences serve as the foundation for structuring the memorization curriculum, with each level assigned distinct targets and pedagogical approaches. Cognitive development is systematically evaluated through daily observations and semester-based assessments, enabling continuous adjustment of instructional strategies.

Classroom observations corroborate these findings, demonstrating that teachers employ differentiated media according to age groups. In lower-level classes, learning activities are dominated by songs and play-based methods, while in upper-level classes, memorization is conducted through structured, verse-by-verse recitation. Children exhibited enthusiasm and engagement that were consistent with the methods applied.

These findings contribute to both developmental and Islamic educational theories. From a developmental perspective, the results support Piaget's view that young children learn through concrete and experiential activities; however, the findings further suggest that such experiences can also serve as mechanisms for value internalization, not merely cognitive development. From the perspective of Islamic education, the study refines the concept of habituation (*ta'wid*) by showing that repetitive religious practices become more effective when integrated with developmentally appropriate, emotionally supportive, and child-centered pedagogies. Rather than functioning as a simple repetition process, memorization habituation appears to operate as a holistic educational practice through which religious knowledge, emotional engagement, and character formation develop simultaneously. This finding suggests that successful Islamic character education in early childhood requires the integration of religious habituation with contemporary developmental principles, thereby bridging traditional Islamic pedagogical approaches and modern child-development theories. In the context of Islamic education, Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasizes that instructional strategies

must consider children's developmental stages to ensure that religious values are internalized without coercion. Similarly, Antonio underscores the importance of systematic yet flexible pedagogical approaches that align with children's cognitive capacities to achieve effective religious character formation.

Recent empirical studies further confirm that children aged 4–5 years are situated within the pre-operational stage, where memorization is more effective when facilitated through multisensory approaches involving songs, movement, and visual stimuli (Faqihuddin et al., 2024; Ningrum & Muhid, 2024). In contrast, children aged 5–6 years demonstrate improved independent repetition abilities, corresponding with the development of short-term memory and sustained attention. These developmental differences necessitate adaptive curriculum design, in which memorization targets and instructional methods are tailored to individual cognitive stages.

Analysis of student development indicates that children aged 4–6 years are in a critical phase for optimally absorbing religious knowledge when appropriate strategies are applied. At the pre-operational stage, children are highly receptive to language and symbolic representations, including religious expressions, although their conceptual understanding remains limited (Rizka & Yeningsih, 2024).

The memorization strategies implemented in this institution reflect a creative multisensory approach. Audio-visual media featuring animated characters reciting verses with clear articulation, accompanied by simplified visual translations, are utilized to enhance comprehension and engagement. The *tahfiz song* method, when combined with body movements, has been shown to significantly improve memory retention compared to conventional lecture-based approaches. Empirical evidence indicates that multisensory learning integrating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modalities substantially enhances the retention of short surah memorization among early childhood learners, particularly when supported by digital media and musical elements (Sidqy & Zahira Syafa, 2024).

An important observation concerns age-based differences in learning outcomes. Children aged 5–6 years demonstrated stronger memorization abilities than those aged 4–5 years, attributable to more advanced memory and concentration development. However, younger children exhibited greater emotional expression and engagement during recitation, particularly when learning was facilitated through play-based methods. These findings highlight the importance of developmentally appropriate practices, as age-adapted *tahfiz* programs can optimize children's cognitive, linguistic, and spiritual development during the *golden age* (Ramadhan et al., 2022).

Additional pedagogical approaches that support age-appropriate adaptation include the *talaqqi* method (direct teacher–student transmission), the verse-linking method for strengthening sequential memory (Nastiti & Wahyuni, 2024), and the *Lauh* method, which assists in managing cognitive load in early childhood Qur'anic learning (Wibowo, 2026). These approaches demonstrate that structured yet flexible strategies are essential in aligning memorization practices with children's developmental readiness.

Personality (Self-Identity)

The findings of this study indicate substantial variation in children's responses to memorization habituation based on personality types. Extroverted children demonstrated more active participation in group-based memorization activities and exhibited higher confidence during public recitation. In contrast, introverted children tended to prefer individualized learning approaches and achieved better outcomes in one-on-one memorization sessions with teachers.

To accommodate this diversity, teachers implemented differentiated instructional strategies by organizing classrooms

into multiple activity zones: collaborative zones for interactive group memorization, individual zones supported by audio recordings, and creative zones where children could express memorized content through drawing or bodily movement. Within a two-month period, this approach resulted in increased participation among introverted children, while extroverted children developed greater reflective engagement.

Interview data further confirm that personality significantly influences memorization success. Normayunita explained that extroverted children tend to memorize more rapidly due to their preference for group repetition and confidence in public performance, whereas introverted children require more personalized, calm, and structured learning environments. The school principal added that teachers are trained to identify children's personality characteristics early in the academic year and to adjust instructional strategies accordingly, including the use of interactive media, individualized guidance, and tailored motivational approaches.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers provide gradual encouragement and individualized attention to shy children, while more confident children are given opportunities to lead prayers or perform recitations in front of their peers. These findings align with the perspective of Islamic educational thought, which emphasizes that instructional strategies must account for individual differences to ensure effective internalization of religious values (Rahman, 2024; Sarnoto, 2023).

Recent empirical studies further support these findings, indicating that extroverted children tend to excel in collaborative and performance-based memorization activities, whereas introverted children benefit more from individualized approaches within calm learning environments. Consequently, differentiated learning strategies are essential to optimize children's memorization potential (Saida, 2023; Sa'ida, 2023). Moreover, differentiated instruction that integrates personality traits and learning styles has been shown to significantly enhance both participation and retention in early childhood Qur'anic memorization (Lestari, 2024; Rieartika, 2025).

Another important finding concerns the relationship between personality types and learning preferences. Children with kinesthetic tendencies respond more effectively to movement-based memorization, visual learners prefer image-based media, and auditory learners benefit from musical or sound-based methods. This aligns with the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) learning approach, which has been empirically demonstrated to improve Qur'anic memorization outcomes among early childhood learners (Yusliani, 2023).

The implementation of VAK-based strategies integrating visual (images and animations), auditory (songs and recitations), and kinesthetic (body movement) modalities enables teachers to accommodate diverse personality profiles and learning styles. Such differentiated strategies not only enhance memorization effectiveness but also contribute to the development of a positive self-identity, allowing each child's innate disposition (*fitrah*) to be expressed and nurtured optimally (Armita, 2024; Sarnoto, 2023).

Psychological Condition (Emotional-Psychological Aspect)

Intensive observations revealed a strong relationship between children's psychological well-being and their memorization abilities. Children experiencing stress or low self-confidence required up to three times longer to master a short surah compared to emotionally stable peers. In extreme cases, some children experienced memory blocking when asked to recite in front of the class.

Teachers addressed these challenges by creating a supportive learning environment through several strategies:

establishing a "safe space" where children can practice without fear of making mistakes, implementing reward systems that emphasize effort rather than outcomes, and incorporating brief relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises or light facial movements before memorization sessions.

Evaluation after one semester of intervention indicated a reduction in memorization-related academic anxiety. More importantly, children reported increased enjoyment of memorization activities compared to the initial stages of the study. These findings reinforce the view that religious character formation must begin with strengthening children's mental well-being before emphasizing cognitive achievement.

Interviews further revealed that children's emotional states significantly influence memorization performance. Teachers consistently assess children's mood and readiness before initiating memorization activities. When children appear fatigued or stressed, instructional methods are modified into more engaging formats, such as Islamic games or storytelling. The principal emphasized the importance of creating a comfortable and enjoyable classroom environment, supported by Islamic-themed decorations and engaging learning media.

Observations confirm that classrooms are designed to be visually appealing and supportive, and teachers provide short breaks when children lose focus. As a result, children appear calmer and more motivated after engaging in enjoyable activities.

These findings align with Qardhawi's theory, which highlights the importance of creating a pleasant educational environment that fosters a love for religious values. Antonio also underscores that Islamic educational strategies must consider learners' psychological conditions to ensure optimal internalization of values without inducing pressure. Therefore, attention to children's psychological well-being not only supports memorization success but also serves as a critical foundation for developing strong religious character from an early age.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings of this study indicate that religious character formation through the habituation of short-surah memorization is influenced by the interaction of family background, developmental stage, personality, and psychological condition. While previous studies in Islamic early childhood education have acknowledged the importance of these factors, the present study suggests that their influence is not fixed or deterministic. Rather, the effectiveness of religious character development appears to depend largely on how teachers respond to and accommodate these differences through adaptive pedagogical practices.

The primary contribution of this study, therefore, lies not in identifying the existence of these factors, which has been documented in earlier literature, but in demonstrating how teachers actively moderated their influence within daily learning activities. For children with limited religious support at home, teachers strengthened school-parent communication and provided additional guidance during memorization sessions. For different developmental stages, teachers adjusted instructional methods by integrating songs, movement, and play-based activities for younger learners while implementing more structured repetition and individual recitation for older children. Personality differences were addressed through differentiated learning arrangements that combined group-based and individual memorization opportunities, whereas psychological barriers such as anxiety and low confidence were mitigated through positive reinforcement and emotionally supportive classroom environments.

These adaptive teacher actions appear to explain why children with diverse backgrounds and characteristics were still able to participate meaningfully in memorization activities and

demonstrate observable religious character outcomes. The findings suggest that teachers functioned not merely as transmitters of religious knowledge but as mediators who transformed potentially limiting factors into opportunities for character development. In this sense, the study refines existing perspectives on Islamic character education by highlighting the central role of teacher agency in moderating contextual and individual differences, thereby enabling the successful internalization of religious values through habituation practices.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of holistic and contextually adaptive approaches in early childhood Islamic education. Previous studies have highlighted that multisensory learning methods and parental involvement significantly enhance children's engagement and memorization outcomes. Similarly, the present study confirms that integrating audio, visual, and kinesthetic strategies contributes to improved retention and meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, the role of family involvement identified in this study aligns with earlier findings that emphasize parental engagement as a critical factor in successful character education. The synergy between school and home environments strengthens the consistency of value internalization, thereby enhancing educational effectiveness.

However, this study extends existing literature by providing a more nuanced analysis of the interaction between developmental, psychological, and personality factors within the context of religious character formation. While previous studies have often focused on single variables such as teaching methods or parental involvement this research demonstrates that effective character education requires a multidimensional approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. In contrast to studies that prioritize cognitive outcomes, this research highlights that memorization alone is insufficient as an indicator of success. Instead, the internalization of values, as reflected in behavioral changes, constitutes a more comprehensive measure of religious character development.

Limitations and Cautions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a qualitative case study design limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific context of TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering. The results are context-specific and may not fully represent other educational settings with different socio-cultural characteristics. Second, the reliance on observational data and self-reported information from teachers and school administrators may introduce subjective bias. Participants may present socially desirable responses, particularly in relation to religious practices and educational effectiveness. Third, the absence of longitudinal data restricts the ability to assess the long-term sustainability of the observed character outcomes. The study captures changes within a limited time frame, which may not fully reflect enduring behavioral transformation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to examine the sustainability of religious character development over time. Such approaches would provide

deeper insights into whether habituation practices lead to lasting behavioral changes beyond early childhood. Additionally, expanding the research scope to include diverse educational settings and socio-cultural contexts would enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies across different regions or institutional types could further elucidate contextual variations in the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Moreover, the integration of mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative insights with quantitative measurements of behavioral outcomes would enable a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between memorization practices and character development. Finally, future studies should explore more specific pedagogical variables, such as the effectiveness of particular multisensory techniques, the role of digital learning media, and the impact of teacher professional development on instructional quality. Such investigations would contribute to the refinement of evidence-based strategies for fostering religious character in early childhood education.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' strategies in fostering religious character through the habituation of short-surah memorization at TK Islam Terpadu Bumi Bahari Pering. The findings indicate that teachers employed three interconnected strategies: multisensory learning approaches, differentiated instruction, and continuous school-parent collaboration. These strategies were adapted to accommodate differences in children's family backgrounds, developmental stages, personality characteristics, and psychological conditions, thereby supporting children's participation in memorization activities and the internalization of religious values.

The findings further suggest that short-surah memorization may contribute to religious character development when implemented within supportive learning environments that integrate cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. The observed character outcomes included discipline, politeness, responsibility, and enthusiasm for religious activities. However, these outcomes should be interpreted as context-specific associations identified within this qualitative case study rather than as direct causal effects.

From a practical perspective, the study highlights the importance of adaptive teaching practices in early childhood Islamic education. Teachers may benefit from combining multisensory memorization techniques with differentiated learning strategies and consistent communication with parents to support children's diverse learning needs. Schools may also strengthen religious character programs by creating emotionally supportive environments and fostering stronger partnerships between home and school.

This study has several limitations. As a single-case qualitative investigation conducted in one Islamic kindergarten, the findings are context-bound and cannot be generalized to all early childhood education settings. Future research may examine similar strategies across multiple schools and employ comparative or longitudinal designs to further explore how memorization habituation contributes to the development of religious character over time. Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic early childhood education by illustrating how teacher-mediated memorization practices can be adapted to diverse learner characteristics and educational contexts in support of religious character formation.

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