

## Table Of Content

<b>Journal Cover</b>	2
<b>Author[s] Statement</b>	3
<b>Editorial Team</b>	4
<b>Article information</b>	5
Check this article update (crossmark)	5
Check this article impact	5
Cite this article	5
<b>Title page</b>	6
Article Title	6
Author information	6
Abstract	6
<b>Article content</b>	8

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# Academia Open



*By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo*

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## Habituation Strategies for Developing Religious and Moral Values in Schools

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### Abstract

**General Background:** The cultivation of moral and religious values is a critical component of early education, particularly in faith-based institutions. **Specific Background:** Muhammadiyah Elementary School 13 Makam Bergola emphasizes religious habituation as part of its character education agenda. **Knowledge Gap:** However, limited studies have examined how structured school programs integrate with home environments to sustain value-based education. **Aims:** This study aims to explore the implementation and effectiveness of moral and religious value habituation at the school through a descriptive qualitative approach involving interviews with teachers, students, and parents. **Results:** Findings reveal that six core indicators—religious habituation, worship practices, praying, polite behavior, positive conduct, and greeting etiquette—are effectively embedded in daily school routines through strategies such as routine programming, teacher modeling, and reward systems. **Novelty:** The study highlights the innovative integration of parenting education and home-school collaboration to address the inconsistency of value practice between school and home environments.

**Implications:** These results underscore the necessity of a holistic, school-family partnership model for sustainable moral and religious development in elementary education.

### Highlights:

- Emphasizes consistent religious and moral value habituation at school.

- Highlights collaboration between teachers and parents to reinforce values.
- Introduces parenting education as a solution to home-school inconsistency.

**Keywords:** Character Education, Religious Values, Moral Values, Habits, Elementary School

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## Introduction

According to Prof. Dr. Zakiah Darajat, the development of religion in children is greatly influenced by the education and experiences they receive, especially during the early growth period, namely the ages of 0 to 12 years. If at this stage the child does not receive religious education or religious experience, then it is very likely that when they are adults, they will show a negative attitude towards religion [1].

Religious and moral values in elementary school children can be understood as psychological changes that occur in students, especially those related to their ability to understand and apply behavior according to the teachings of their religion. A person's mindset, speech, and actions are often associated with morality, while religious morals are based on beliefs derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. These religious and moral values are the initial foundation for children in living their lives, including in facing various events, both positive and negative, in their daily lives [2].

Moral education is a form of awareness that plays a role in equipping students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that support personal satisfaction and social life [3]. This definition reflects the two main objectives of moral education. First, guiding the younger generation in acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that can improve their quality of life. Second, encouraging individuals to play an active role in social life and participate in building a better society, based on concern and compassion for fellow humans and living things, without violating the rights of others in realizing applicable legal values. Education should not only emphasize the cognitive aspect but also religious and moral education for elementary school children which is adjusted to the development of the child's soul and develops all aspects of life [4].

Various forms of deviant behavior are often found in the lives of children in today's era. Problems related to religious and moral values of children such as bullying, stealing, smoking, brawls, fighting parents, and so on are increasingly disturbing the community, especially teachers and parents. It can be said that in addition to efforts to improve the cognitive quality of children, issues of morality and character of children are also important things to pay attention to. Religious and moral values in a child can be recognized through observation of daily attitudes and behaviors that reflect their personality.

Activities carried out to develop religious and moral values of students at SD Muhammadiyah 13 Makam Bergola with the habituation method. Through habituation in instilling moral values, it is hoped that these values that have begun to fade due to the negative influence of the child's environment can be re-instilled. The goal is for children to have good morals in the future, because if ignored from an early age, this can have a negative impact on the younger generation in the future. This study aims to identify various activities that can develop and improve moral and religious values in students at SD Muhammadiyah 13 Makam Bergola, as well as to find out effective habituation methods in fostering these values in students at SD Muhammadiyah 13 Makam Bergola.

### 1. Development of Religious and Moral Values

Development is a process of change that occurs gradually and continuously in an individual from birth to death. This process reflects qualitative changes that focus on improving the function of physical organs, not just changes in physical shape or size. In other words, development focuses more on improving the psychological function of the body's organs. [5]

Religion is a guide to life that regulates human relationships with God, with themselves, and with other humans. In Islam, religion is in the form of revelation from Allah sent down by the prophet containing commands and prohibitions. The values or rules contained in religious teachings are in line with human nature as religious beings. Individuals who use religion as a guideline in behaving and living their lives have basically emerged from the darkness of ignorance and gained enlightenment in their lives.

The word moral comes from the Latin "mores" which means procedures in life, habits, and customs. Morals refer to instructions about good or bad things that will be received through a person's actions, attitudes, obligations, morals, and behavior [6]. According to Mustika Abidin [7] morals are views on good and bad, right and wrong, and things that are allowed and not allowed in life. Meanwhile, morality is the readiness to accept and implement moral rules, values, or principles. Moral values function as a call to do good and a prohibition to do bad [8].

As many people do, every religion basically teaches goodness, which means that every religion also instills moral values. In general, religious teachings not only emphasize human obligations to God, but also obligations that have a positive impact on others. In Islam, for example, there are many teachings that encourage good deeds. These moral values can be found in the Qur'an, which is part of the obligations of every Muslim.

Thus, it can be concluded that moral development in elementary school children is a psychological change that occurs within an individual, involving social interaction with others and belief in religious teachings that have been received. In this process, individuals will begin to assess and determine for themselves which behavior is appropriate to do based on applicable norms, and which behavior should be avoided.

### 2. Stage of Development of Children's Religious and Moral Values



The stages of religious moral development that are quite well-known are those put forward in the Theory of Faith by James Fowler. In his theory, Fowler describes six stages of religious development that are interrelated with other developmental theories, such as those developed by Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg.

Level	Age	Characteristics
Level 1 Intuitive projective faith	Early childhood	Intuitive images of good and bad, fantasy and reality are considered the same thing.
Level 2 Mythical-literal faith	End of childhood	Thoughts become more logical and concrete; religious stories are taken literally; God is depicted as a parental figure.
Level 3 Synthetic conventional faith	Early adolescence	More abstract thinking adapts to religious beliefs.
Level 4 Individuative-reflective faith	Late adolescence and early adulthood	For the first time, individuals were able to take full responsibility for their religious beliefs, exploring the depths of practicing values.
Level 5 Conjunctive faith	Mid adulthood	More open to paradoxical and conflicting views; comes from an awareness of one's limits and limitations.
Level 6 Universalizing	End of time	A transcendental belief system for adults to attain a sense of divinity; conflict events are not always seen as paradoxes.

**Table 1.** James Fowler's development of religious morality [9]

The stages of moral development according to Kohlberg are divided into three levels with six stages. Kohlberg explains that moral development occurs through the spontaneous activities of children that develop through social interaction, but this interaction has special characteristics because it involves personal factors, namely the active role of the child's own activities [10]. Another important thing about Kohlberg's theory of moral development is his emphasis on moral orientation in the cognitive domain, which is distinguished from moral behavior in the form of real actions.

Level	Stages
<b>Prakonvensional Moralitas</b>	<b>Obedience and Punishment Orientation</b>
At this stage, children learn morality based on the consequences of an action, such as rewards or punishments. They are less likely to break rules because they are afraid of being punished.	Children's understanding of right and wrong is determined by authority. They follow the rules to avoid punishment from that authority.
<b>Konvensional</b>	<b>Relativist-Instrumental Orientation</b>
A child considers an action to be good if it meets the expectations of family authorities and peer groups.	Relationships between humans that include elements of reciprocity and equal sharing.
<b>Pasca-Konvensional</b>	<b>Good child orientation "sweet child"</b>
At this level, the rules and intuitions of society are not seen as the ultimate goal, but are needed as subjects. Children avoid the punishment of conscience.	Actions oriented towards good behavior and pleasing others.
	<b>Order and authority orientation</b>
	Good behavior is simply doing one's duty, respecting authority, and maintaining social order.
	<b>Social-legalistic control orientation</b>
	There is a form of mutual agreement with society as a whole, accompanied by a clear awareness of the relativity of personal values and opinions.
	<b>Orientation of conscience/universal principles</b>
	Truth is determined by the conscience which is in line with universal ethical principles that are abstract and respect human dignity.

**Table 2.** Stages of moral development according to Kohlberg [10]

### 3. Habituation

According to Febriyanti, habituation is an activity that is carried out continuously and repeatedly, which aims to perfect a skill so that it becomes a habit. This is intended so that children are able to get used to good deeds by applying norms, religion, and laws [11]. Habituation is a series of ways to form and foster children's character. The habituation method is very practical in teaching children to get used to positive activities so that children will not let go until they are old. The development of habits includes various aspects, such as the development of morals and religious values, as well as social, emotional, and independence development. Examples include getting children used to praying before and after studying, and getting them used to using three magic sentences, namely, sorry, please, and thank you. This habituation method is considered very effective in being applied to elementary school-aged children and is closely related to the exemplary method. In everyday life, habituation has an important role, because many of a person's behaviors and actions emerge as a result of habits.

## Method

The type of research in this study uses descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative is a form of research to describe phenomena, both natural phenomena and human phenomena [12]. Data is taken based on existing studies in the field by researchers. Field studies are used so that researchers obtain information from sources related to the development of religious and moral values of elementary school children that have been achieved.

In data collection, researchers use interview techniques which are a way to obtain data from sources or respondents who are the objects of research. Interviews are also a technique to find out the characteristics of children, this interview is conducted with light but meaningful chats to dig up information. In this interview technique, researchers interview teachers and students concerned to find out how the behavior and attitudes of the development of religious and moral values are achieved in elementary school children, from all activities at school, at home and in the child's play environment. To ensure the validity of the data use data triangulation techniques by integrating several sources of information and data collection methods. Then the researcher re-verifies the results of the analysis with the informants to ensure the accuracy of the data. This study applies the content analysis methodology - a systematic and objective approach to in-depth examination and interpretation of textual or printed materials.

The data in this study were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification [12]. Data reduction is done by selecting, simplifying, and focusing on important data that is in accordance with the research objectives. This process aims to organize raw information to make it easier to understand and interpret. Furthermore, data presentation is done in the form of descriptive narratives from the interview results, which aim to provide a systematic and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, which takes place gradually and continuously during the data collection and analysis process, in order to build a holistic understanding of the object of study. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses triangulation techniques and sources, namely by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation.

## Results and Discussion

This study prioritizes the instillation of moral and religious values in educational institutions, especially elementary schools. Data presentation is arranged based on the focus of the study with the aim of facilitating the presentation of information, accompanied by explanations that are adjusted to the results of observations and interviews that have been conducted by researchers with school principals, homeroom teachers, and students.

Based on Table 1 above, it can be concluded that children in late childhood are at Stage 2: Mythical-literal faith. At this stage, 12-year-old children show more logical and concrete thinking skills, and tend to understand religious stories literally. This is in line with the results of interviews with teachers, which revealed that the subjects had indeed reached the Mythical-literal faith stage. Meanwhile, the development of moral values according to Kohlberg, children's moral development occurs gradually according to age. Children under the age of 9 are generally at the first level (pre-conventional). Entering the end of childhood to early adolescence, most children have reached the second level (conventional). For 6th-grade elementary school students who are around 12 years old, they are usually at stages 3 and 4 in this conventional level. Kohlberg emphasized that the order of these levels and stages is universal and occurs sequentially. Teachers also support this by selecting subjects based on achievements in religious and moral aspects. From the results of direct interviews with the subjects, it is known that the subjects show a logical and concrete mindset, reflected in their awareness of daily activities, as well as their ability to link theoretical concepts and real practices in religious values. In addition, the subjects also make their parents role models in their lives.

### 1. Implementation of the Development of Children's Religious and Moral Values in School

The development of moral and religious values is carried out through the stages of recognizing goodness, thinking logically about goodness, feeling and loving goodness, to realizing goodness in real actions. This process includes cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects by instilling honesty values so that students have noble morals. Morality is formed through habits in thoughts, feelings, and actions. Efforts to foster religious values in children can be done by introducing them to God, getting them used to worshiping, and instilling good morals [6]. The implementation of the development of moral and religious values runs as the learning takes place, teachers can monitor students directly with the habituation method. Through habituation, according to Pavlov's theory, it states that in order to cause or bring up the desired reaction called a response, it is necessary to have a stimulus that is carried out repeatedly so that it is called habituation [13]. By providing a habituated stimulus, it will also cause a habituated response.

Based on the results of observations and interviews with teachers at SD Muhammadiyah XII Makam Bergola Surakarta, there are several habituation activities carried out to develop the moral and religious values of grade III students of SD Muhammadiyah XII Makam Bergola Surakarta, namely:

## **a. Habituation of Religious Values**

Based on observations in the school environment, all students have demonstrated a basic understanding of Islam through daily habits such as mentioning the concept of divinity (recognizing Allah SWT as God and the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the apostle) in learning materials, performing congregational prayers in the school prayer room, and participating in daily Quran reading programs. The school applies a gradual approach in fostering worship, where most students have become accustomed to performing obligatory prayers and reciting the Quran, while for fasting there are variations in achievement - the majority of students are able to fast fully, some are still in the learning process with teacher guidance, and some require special adjustments according to their respective health conditions, while still getting assistance from the homeroom teacher and religious teacher. In addition to the activities mentioned above, there are also other routine activities, namely commemorating major holidays such as 1 Muharram or the Islamic New Year. This 1 Muharram activity is organized by the students' parents, although its implementation still takes place in the school environment. Parents also play a role as a form of cooperation with teachers, with the aim that children understand the teachings of the religion they believe in and get used to it from an early age, so that it becomes part of their habits until adulthood [14].

## **b. Habituation of Worship Practices**

Based on observations of religious activities at school, students have generally been able to perform prayer movements correctly through a program to familiarize themselves with congregational prayer held every day. Religious teachers noted that female students showed greater independence in performing prayers, while male students still needed more intensive guidance from teachers to ensure the accuracy of movements and solemnity. The school addressed the challenge of student concentration by implementing a mentoring system by class teachers during prayer times, providing an understanding of the importance of timely worship through short lectures before prayer, and creating an award calendar to motivate discipline in worship. This habituation is supported by the formation of a religious environment at school through posters of prayer procedures, a worship calendar, and concrete examples from teachers. This is in line with El Diana's research explaining that getting children used to worship from a young age is an effective strategy in cultivating religious and moral values. Through consistent application with an appropriate approach, children will be able to absorb religious values while developing a virtuous personality and devotion to God [15].

## **c. Praying habits**

The school has instilled the habit of praying through daily routines such as prayers before and after learning, prayers before eating in the school canteen, and prayers when starting extracurricular activities. Class teachers consistently guide students to memorize and understand the meaning of daily prayers through repetition methods and concrete examples [16]. There has been significant development where students who initially needed to be reminded intensively are now able to lead prayers independently in class activities. The school also integrates prayer practices with learning materials through prayer posters in each room, daily prayer pocket books, and prayer memorization competitions held periodically to motivate students.

## **d. Habituation of Polite Behavior**

Based on observations at school, students have shown a good understanding of distinguishing polite and impolite behavior through various habituation activities. The purpose of instilling polite and mannerly attitudes is so that children are accustomed to the moral values that have been taught by teachers at school. By learning morals from an early age, it is hoped that students will be able to practice them in their daily lives and maintain them into adulthood. The school consistently instills values of politeness through the "Pagi Ramah" program (greetings and greetings), good table manners in the school canteen, and the habit of queuing orderly. Teachers use the role play method to teach how to respond to friends who tease each other, where students are invited to practice directly giving advice with good language. Positive developments can be seen from the increasing awareness of students in behaving, such as always eating while sitting in the canteen, queuing orderly, and politely reminding each other when there are friends who behave inappropriately. The school also implements a reward system to strengthen the

formation of this positive character. Activities such as greetings, queuing orderly, table manners, asking permission, and maintaining cleanliness are part of the habituation that forms students' polite character automatically and continuously [17].

#### **e. Positive Behavior Habits**

The school has successfully instilled the values of discipline and responsibility through the "Cleanliness Cadre" program where students voluntarily maintain classroom cleanliness, tidy up learning equipment, and care for plants in the school environment. Teachers reported significant developments in student independence, from needing constant reminders to now being able to take the initiative in daily activities such as cleaning the blackboard, organizing books in the class mini library, and helping friends in need. This habituation is supported through the "Discipline Star" award system and behavioral modeling by teachers who provide direct examples in daily school activities. Instilling politeness values in schools through habituation is done with a combination of routine, spontaneous, programmed activities, and exemplary behavior. Habits that are done routinely can make children do the habit by themselves without being told. Children will do it consciously without any coercion because children are used to doing routines every day. With direct habituation, children are taught discipline in doing and completing an activity [18].

#### **f. Habitual Greetings and Politeness Values**

The school has implemented the "Greeting Culture" program as part of the character building of students, where every member of the school greets each other with a good greeting when meeting in the school environment. Teachers reported that students have shown positive developments in getting used to saying hello when entering the classroom, meeting teachers, and interacting with peers. This habituation is reinforced through modeling activities by teachers and school staff, as well as integration into learning through role play on how to shake hands properly. The school also developed a "Morning Greeting" program at the gate where teachers and students greet each other every morning, creating a warm and religious environment. This development shows that the habituation of politeness values in elementary schools is effective in shaping students' character, especially when supported by concrete examples from the surrounding environment and fun learning methods. This is in line with the main research that the implementation of a positive culture with the habituation of 5S, where students greet, say hello, smile, are polite, and courteous in front of the school gate to teachers and other school residents. Teachers also greet, say hello, and smile at students when entering the classroom [19].

### **2. Challenges in Instilling Religious and Moral Values in Schools**

Based on observations in the school environment, teachers face several challenges in instilling religious values in students, especially in creating consistency between habituation at school and practice at home. The main obstacles include differences in parents' understanding of religious learning materials, difficulties in creating a conducive environment for practicing worship at home, and variations in the level of family support in guiding children. The school responded to these challenges through a parenting education program for parents, the provision of daily worship practice guidebooks, and a monitoring system based on a liaison book. However, teachers reported that some students still needed intensive guidance in carrying out worship independently, while others had shown significant progress. The school continues to strive to strengthen collaboration with parents through regular meetings and intensive communication to ensure consistency in the habituation of religious values both at school and at home [20].

In addition, the process of strengthening religious and moral values can be disrupted if the school conditions are unstable, for example due to internal conflict, violence, or other problems. Second, the limitations of teachers in mastering effective teaching methods for religious and moral values also become an obstacle. In addition, the influence of the social environment outside of school, such as mass media or peer relationships that conflict with these values can also hinder the formation of student character. This is in line with Khoiriah's research that the development of a person's values, morals, and attitudes is influenced by various factors, including psychological, social, cultural, and physical environmental aspects. This can occur in various environments, both in the family, school, and society [4].

## **Conclusion**

Based on the implementation of the habituation program in schools, it can be concluded that the development of religious and moral values in elementary school students has been implemented through daily activities such as congregational prayer, greeting culture, prayer before studying, and the practice of noble morals in social interactions. The school has succeeded in creating a supportive environment through structured habituation, modeling by teachers, and reward programs that motivate students. The results are seen in the development of students in cognitive (understanding of religion), affective (appreciation of values), and psychomotor (practice of worship) aspects. Although the majority of students have shown significant progress, there are some students who still need intensive assistance, especially in the consistency of worship practices and the application of moral values in everyday life. The success of this program is supported by effective collaboration between schools and parents, as well as a contextual and enjoyable learning approach for elementary school students.

The need to improve teacher professionalism, strengthen cooperation with parents, and create a school environment that supports religious and moral values in order to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has noble character and is socially responsible. This study certainly still has limitations in research variables so that in further research, research can be conducted on the development of religious and moral values of students in the digitalization era. About how the habituation of these values can be adapted or integrated into students' digital environment, for example through ethical digital habits, social media-based character education, or digital literacy programs based on moral values.

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