



Challenges and Opportunities in Early Childhood Religious and Moral Education: A Perspective from the Evaluation of Logical Models

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Abstract

This study is an evaluation that aims to analyze the development of religious and moral values aspects of early childhood. The method used is a qualitative method, where data are collected through in-depth discussions with a logical model evaluation analysis in early childhood religious and moral values (NAM) development programs. The results of the study found three important things, namely first, so far value-based learning for early childhood is done through understanding religious symbols, daily routine worship practices, and daily prayers, while moral strengthening is done through fairy tales containing good values. Understanding and strengthening religious moral values in early childhood is implemented variably according to the needs of each school. This study also identified some weaknesses in the cultivation of religious and moral values in early childhood, namely routine activities that can obscure children's understanding and children's lack of enthusiasm due to mistakes in approaches that are not adapted to psychological development. Variations in teaching methods that are not appropriate for children's psychology can cause a distorted understanding of religious and moral values to become shallow. A holistic and diverse approach that takes into account the needs and characteristics of each child is needed to ensure that the cultivation of religious and moral values is effective and sustainable.

Keywords: Evaluation; Religious Values; Moral Values; Early Childhood; Logic Model Evaluation.

Abstrak

Studi ini merupakan evaluasi yang bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengembangan aspek nilai agama dan moral anak usia dini. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif, dimana data dikumpulkan melalui diskusi mendalam dengan analisis evaluasi model logis dalam program pengembangan nilai-nilai agama dan moral (NAM) anak usia dini. Hasil penelitian menemukan tiga hal penting yaitu pertama, selama ini pembelajaran berbasis nilai untuk anak usia dini dilakukan melalui pemahaman simbol-simbol agama, praktik ibadah rutin sehari-hari, doa sehari-hari, sedangkan penguatan moral dilakukan melalui dongeng yang mengandung nilai-nilai kebaikan. Pemahaman dan penguatan nilai moral agama pada anak usia dini diimplementasikan secara variatif sesuai dengan kebutuhan masing-masing sekolah. Penelitian ini juga berhasil mengidentifikasi beberapa kelemahan dalam penanaman nilai-nilai agama dan moral pada anak usia dini yaitu kegiatan rutin yang dapat mengaburkan pemahaman anak serta kurangnya antusiasme anak akibat kesalahan pendekatan yang tidak disesuaikan dengan perkembangan psikologis. Variasi dalam metode pengajaran yang kurang tepat sesuai dengan psikologi anak dapat menyebabkan terdistorsinya pemahaman terhadap nilai-nilai agama dan moral anak sehingga menjadi dangkal. Diperlukan pendekatan yang holistik dan beragam dengan mempertimbangkan kebutuhan dan karakteristik masing-masing anak untuk

memastikan bahwa penanaman nilai-nilai agama dan moral dilakukan secara efektif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Evaluasi; Nilai-Nilai Agama; Nilai Moral; Anak Usia Dini; Evaluasi Model Logika.

INTRODUCTION

Failure to teach religious and moral values has negative consequences for early childhood development. Without religious and moral teachings, children find it difficult to distinguish between right and wrong behavior, and this can even lead to irresponsible behavior.¹ This is dangerous as it can be detrimental to oneself and others. Without the guidance of religious and moral values, children can experience emotional and spiritual instability leaving them without a frame of reference to deal with crises, failures, or challenges in their lives.² This, according to Barnes³ can lead to missed opportunities to develop a sense of connection with others and something bigger than oneself. Worst of all, the failure of moral and religious education in early childhood can open the door to future social vulnerability, identity confusion, and psychological instability.⁴

The issue of moral education has become a serious issue that has received widespread attention from academics in various countries. Wanxue and Hanwei, for example, highlight that aspects of moral education are the gateway to the growth of positive talents in early childhood in South America.⁵ This opinion is in line with StockMorton's analysis, which emphasizes that the development of children's talents is closely related to parenting during the golden age.⁶ On the other hand, Muega argues that upbringing rooted in Christian values in the Philippines contributes greatly to shaping children's morals and behavior as adults.⁷ This finding is also in line with Almonte's research in 2003,⁸ which shows that children who lack religious education in early childhood are more likely to commit violent acts as adults.⁹ Other studies conducted by

¹ Lynne Grant and Yonah H. Matemba, 'Problems of Assessment in Religious and Moral Education: The Scottish Case', *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 34, no. 1 (April 2013): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2013.759338>.

² Rob Freathy and Anna Davis, 'Theology in Multi-Faith Religious Education: A Taboo to Be Broken?', *Research Papers in Education* 34, no. 6 (November 2019): 749–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1550802>; Thijl Sunier, 'Moral Failure, Everyday Religion, and Islamic Authorization', in *Straying from the Straight Path: How Senses of Failure Invigorate Lived Religion* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Berghahn Books, 2017), 107–23.

³ L. Philip Barnes, 'What Has Morality to Do with Religious Education?', *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 32, no. 2 (August 2011): 131–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2011.600813>.

⁴ James C Conroy, David Lundie, and Vivienne Baumfield, 'Failures of Meaning in Religious Education', *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 33, no. 3 (December 2012): 309–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2012.732812>.

⁵ Qi Wanxue and Tang Hanwei, 'The Social and Cultural Background of Contemporary Moral Education in China', *Journal of Moral Education* 33, no. 4 (December 2004): 465–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724042000315590>.

⁶ Phyllis Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society: The Development of Moral Laïque in Nineteenth Century France* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988).

⁷ Michael Arthus G.. Muega, "'Values/Moral Education: Current Conceptions and Practices in Philippines Schools', *Alipato: A Journal of Basic Education* 4 (2010); Sheldon Ives Agaton, 'Morality and Religiosity: A Filipino Experience', *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (December 2015): 85–97, <https://doi.org/10.32871/rmrj1503.02.07>.

⁸ Istiyani, D. and Wibowo, A.M. (2020) 'Internalizing Nationalism Awareness in Early Childhood Islamic Education Institution with The Spirit of Aswaja an-Nahdliyah', *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 5(02), pp. 251–266. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v5i02.1168>.

⁹ Sherlyne A. Almonte, 'National Identity in Elementary Moral Education Textbooks in the Philippines', *Comparative Education* 2003, no. 29 (2003): 186–204, <https://doi.org/10.5998/jces.2003.186>; Dwi Istiyani and A.M. Wibowo, 'Internalizing Nationalism Awareness in Early Childhood Islamic Education Institution with The Spirit of Aswaja An-Nahdliyah', *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 5, no. 02 (December 2020): 251–66, <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v5i02.1168>.

MacAllister and Macleod¹⁰ in Scotland, and Yoshino¹¹ in Japan show the positive influence of moral education on the formation of good behavior through early childhood education. The results confirm that morality plays an important role in a person's ability to mature and adapt to a new environment.

While these studies have been instrumental in the development of moral and religious education in many countries, research that specifically looks at how religious and moral values are embedded in Islamic-based early childhood education institutions is rare.¹² In fact, in the context of Indonesia as a plural country that recognizes various types of religions and ethnicities, it is very important to accommodate the diversity of its society.¹³ Based on the research gap in this space, as well as the rapid development of Islamic-based early childhood education institutions in Indonesia, this study aims to evaluate the logic model on the development of religious and moral values aspects of early childhood in Raudhotul Atfal. This effort is important to ensure that religious and moral education for early childhood does not only focus on aspects of ritual formality but also on a deep understanding of spiritual and moral values that are rooted in the context of daily life, forming a solid character and rooted in the principles of virtue.¹⁴

It is important to conduct this research qualitatively with a Logical Model Evaluation Perspective. This is because this approach allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the complexity of interactions between factors that influence early childhood character and moral formation. By using a qualitative approach, this study will better explore the social, cultural, and environmental contexts that influence religious and moral learning in early childhood.¹⁵ The Logical Model Evaluation perspective allows researchers to systematically analyze various variables involved in the learning process, such as teaching methods, the role of teachers, and support from the family and school environment.¹⁶ As such, this research can

¹⁰ MacAllister, J. and Macleod, G. (2016) 'Philosophy in Scotland and Scottish Education', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 10(3), pp. 197–210. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2016.1193759> James MacAllister and Gale Macleod, 'Philosophy in Scotland and Scottish Education', *Ethics and Social Welfare* 10, no. 3 (July 2016): 197–210, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2016.1193759>.

¹¹ Yoshino, K. (2019) 'Rethinking Theories of Nationalism', in *Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Routledge, pp. 8–28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315027982-2>

¹² James M. Day and Paulo Jesus, 'Epistemic Subjects, Discursive Selves, and Dialogical Self Theory in the Psychology of Moral and Religious Development: Mapping Gaps and Bridges', *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 26, no. 2 (April 2013): 137–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2013.759030>.

¹³ Lene Pedersen and Lisa Cliggett, *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Anthropology* (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529756449>; Azyumardi Azra, 'Religious Pluralism in Indonesia Azyumardi Azra', in *Islam Beyond Conflict* (Routledge, 2017), 125–34, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315251769-22>; Paul Marshall, 'The Ambiguities of Religious Freedom in Indonesia', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 1 (January 2018): 85–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2018.1433588>; Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, 'Constructing Indonesian Religious Pluralism: The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in Countering Violent Religious Extremism', *JOURNAL OF INDONESIA ISLAM* 15, no. 2 (December 2021): 433, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.2.433-464>; Abdul Mu'ti, 'Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 21, no. 2 (April 2023): 121–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2023.2200280>; A M Wibowo, 'Political View and Orientation of the Rohis Members Toward the Form of the State', *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 2, no. 2 (December 2017): 234, <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v2i2.498>.

¹⁴ Andrew Bolton, 'Moral Development: Whose Ethics in the Teaching of Religious Education?', *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 2 (June 1997): 197–210, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724970260207>; Russell Sandberg, 'Religion in Schools: Learning Lessons from Wales', in *Religion in Schools: Learning Lessons from Wales* (Anthem Press, 2022), 1–134.

¹⁵ Rachman, Azhariah, Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, Fadhillah Fadhillah, Nanda Saputra, and Zulkifli Zulkifli. "Building Religious Character of Students in Madrasah Through Moral Learning." *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (2023): 78-94.

¹⁶ Savaya, Riki, and Mark Waysman. "The logic model: A tool for incorporating theory in development and evaluation of programs." *Administration in Social Work* 29, no. 2 (2005): 85-103.

provide valuable insights for the development of effective and holistic educational approaches to strengthen religious and moral values in the younger generation.

METHODS

The study adopted qualitative research with focus groups as the main instrument for data collection.¹⁷ The selection of in-depth focus group interviews allowed the researcher to detail and understand the respondent's frame of mind more holistically.¹⁸ This decision was based on the advantages of the method, which can provide a rich and in-depth context, enriching the understanding of the phenomenon under study.¹⁹ Therefore, this method facilitates capturing more nuanced and complex views from focus groups, opening up opportunities for more in-depth and interpretive analysis.

The focus group members we chose to elaborate on their strategies for strengthening religious and moral values were Raudhotul Atfal teachers in Semarang City who had been teaching for more than three years. The decision was made because this is considered a critical stage in their academic journey. Teachers at this stage are believed to have developed a mature understanding of their duties and obligations.²⁰ The selection of focus group members was based on the need to obtain representative and diverse data on the cultivation of religious and moral values in the context of early childhood education.²¹

Table 1: Informant Profile

No	Initial	Experience in teaching (in years)	Institution
1	M1	7 years	RA Al Hidayah
2	M2	4 years	RA Masjid Al Azhar
3	M3	7 years	RA Masjid Al Azhar
4	M4	3 years	RA Al Hidayah
5	M5	7 years	RA An-Naafi
6	M6	3 years	RA An Naafi

The focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face in three sessions, each lasting 60-70 minutes for each teacher involved. After obtaining consent to record non-verbal expressions, each participant's responses were recorded. A moderator guided the discussion, focusing on how the characteristics of responsibility and independence are developed in schools. Efforts were made to ensure that the discussion covered only the main aspects relevant to the research objectives and to avoid discussing unrelated matters. Data were recorded and transcriptions made with the guidance of the moderator and then analyzed qualitatively to explore the concepts in the participants' responses. These concepts were then grouped into themes, and evaluated for their intensity, depth, and specificity to the research questions.

¹⁷ David L. Morgan, 'Planning and Research Design for Focus Groups', in *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997), 31-45, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984287.n4>.

¹⁸ Manju Gundumogula, 'Importance of Focus Groups in Qualitative Research', *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 8, no. 11 (November 2020), <https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2020/v8/i11/HS2011-082>.

¹⁹ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Qualitative Methodology (Including Focus Groups)* (Sage publications, 2007).

²⁰ Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell, *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges* (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435620>.

²¹ Marie C. Hoepfl, 'Choosing Qualitative Research: A Primer for Technology Education Researchers', *Journal of Technology Education* 9, no. 1 (September 1997), <https://doi.org/10.21061/jte.v9i1.a.4>.

Statements that were repeated or received extensive responses from participants during the discussion received special attention in the analysis.²²

In addition, observation and documentation studies were also used as ways to collect data. Both provide an in-depth understanding of the practice of religious education and moral reinforcement. Through observation, researchers can directly observe interactions between students, teachers, and the learning environment and identify practices that support the development of religious and moral education.²³ Meanwhile, relevant documentation studies provided insights into the history, school policies, and implementation of the curriculum.²⁴ By combining the two, this research can produce a holistic understanding of how religious and moral values can be effectively integrated into the Raudhotul Athfal environment.

RESULTS

Early Childhood Religious and Moral Values Development Program in Semarang City

This research shows that instilling religious and moral values in early childhood can be done through various forms of activities that are educational and character-building. Informant M2 explained that among the forms is stories or fairy tales that contain moral messages and good values. In addition, the introduction of religious symbols and light worship practices is also an effective way to instill religious values from an early age. For this reason, in the discussion of the Semarang City Ikatan Guru Raudhotul Atfal (IGRA), strengthening teachers' skills related to play activities that teach cooperation, honesty, and empathy as well as help build moral awareness in children is highly emphasized. However, informant M2 explained that strengthening NAM must involve parents and a supportive social environment by providing good examples and giving positive reinforcement is also very important in shaping the religious and moral character of early childhood. With a consistent and comprehensive approach, the cultivation of religious and moral values is expected to form a strong foundation for good personal development in children throughout their lives.

The strengthening of NAM, in addition to the previous initiatives, also received strong support from the Semarang City Roudhotul Athfal Teachers Association. This organization actively encourages its members to plan learning that takes into account the needs and characteristics of learners. This effort is reflected in routine activities such as praying before and after learning and creating a conducive learning environment that integrates spiritual and moral aspects. In addition, special activities such as memorizing short letters, worship practices, and visits to places of worship provide a practical dimension to religious learning. Informant M1 emphasized that IGRA's approach in integrating daily activities and learning is more based on constructivist logic, providing a solid foundation for the holistic development of students. *“We encourage members to create a learning environment that pays attention to spiritual and moral aspects. Special activities, such as memorizing short letters, worship practices, and visits to places of worship, are a form of commitment to implementing the logic model in classroom activities”*.

²² Oliver C. Robinson, ‘Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1 (January 2014): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543>.

²³ Curt M. Adams and Gaetane Jean-Marie, ‘A Diffusion Approach to Study Leadership Reform’, *Journal of Educational Administration* 49, no. 4 (July 2011): 354–77, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111146452>; Anne Mulhall, ‘In the Field: Notes on Observation in Qualitative Research’, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 41, no. 3 (February 2003): 306–13, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02514.x>; Bernard E. Whitley and Patricia Keith-Spiegel, ‘Academic Integrity as an Institutional Issue’, *Ethics & Behavior* 11, no. 3 (July 2001): 325–42, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327019EB1103_9.

²⁴ Jan Lunze, ‘Process Supervision by Means of Qualitative Models’, *Annual Reviews in Control* 24 (January 2000): 41–54, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1367-5788\(00\)90011-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1367-5788(00)90011-7).

As the strengthening of NAM described by M1, M2, an educator at RA Al Hidayah Semarang, has a unique concept in developing learning in the play area. This approach is applied by teaching students to sit with a good attitude, respect the teacher, maintain cleanliness, be responsible, complete tasks well, put toys back in place, not disturb friends, and throw garbage in its place. In the preparation of learning aspects of Religious and Moral Values (NAM), RA integrates all learning with these values, while designing strategies to convey and apply them to learners. Children can memorize short letters with varying levels of achievement in each group. This concept aims to form an attitude of discipline, politeness, and respect for the teacher. Informant M2 said, *“Implementing logic learning doesn't have to be in class, I like to remind them when playing. This relates to ethics such as sitting well, respecting the teacher, keeping clean, being responsible, completing tasks well, putting toys back in their place, not disturbing friends, and throwing garbage in its place.”*

The NAM-based learning implemented by M2, as a teaching staff at RA Al Hidayah Semarang, is unique in that it involves understanding, ordering, and implementing rules. The unique concept applied involves education outside the classroom in shaping attitudes of discipline, courtesy, and respect for teachers, showing the application of logic in regulating student discipline and behavior. Logical principles are also evident in the Religious and Moral Values (NAM) aspect, where the RA links learning to these values, reflecting a logical understanding of the relationship between religious and moral teachings and daily life. The strategies designed to deliver and apply them to learners also reflect a logical approach in achieving learning objectives. Thus, learning outside the classroom is not only limited to cognitive aspects but also includes aspects of behavior and values, creating a holistic learning environment.

Meanwhile, informant M4 as a teacher of RA Masjid Al Azhar Semarang City applies the NAM learning strategy by ensuring a deep understanding and ability to apply NAM in daily life. Specialized and expert educators, especially in the application of BTQ, are also prepared to ensure teaching effectiveness. She also added that the KTSP concept adopted by this institution also includes its distinctive features, especially in the application of NAM. To support the learning process, RA Masjid Al Azhar prepares materials including the Annual Program (Prota), Semester Program (Promes), Daily Activity Plan (RKH), Stipulation of rules at school, Hijaiyah letters, prayer props, liquid, and solid materials, and play tools and Educational Game Tools as an integral part of a holistic learning approach. *“We prepare several agendas such as the Annual Program (Prota), Semester Program (Promes), Daily Activity Plan (RKH), Determination of rules at school, Hijaiyah letters, prayer props, liquid, solid materials, and play tools and Educational Game Tools.”*

Meanwhile, observations show that the implementation of NAM is done through the strategy of developing religious and moral values, which is integrated into special activities with the application of appropriate methods. The activities include reading daily prayers, such as prayers before and after eating, by reading or guiding children while eating to make it easier for them to follow. In addition, there are special activities such as Dhuha prayers in congregation and stories about the prophets. The NAM development process involves children in activities such as *dhuba* prayers in congregation and *murojaah* together every morning during habituation. Children also do the morning pledge, including the shahada, prayer before learning, and song movements. Pledge leaders change daily, giving all children equal opportunity to lead the pledge in front of the school.

Meanwhile, informant M5 as a teacher at RA Al Hidayah Jarakah Ngaliyan, explained, to implement NAM, the school seeks to conduct a self-development program, including

recognizing and memorizing the names of religions in Indonesia, understanding the religion adopted, learning Hijaiyah letters, memorizing short letters, daily prayers, and *toyibah* sentences. This program aims not only to enrich religious knowledge but also to foster children's character and ethics from an early age. This is supported by the observation that teachers at RA Al Hidayah Tugu focus on developing religious and moral values through the practice of reading prayers before learning, including *asmaul husna*, short letters, daily prayers, and hadith. In addition, other activities include the practice of duha prayer, reciting the Quran, giving alms, praying and eating together (*tablil*), Hajj rituals, the commemoration of Islamic holidays, as well as habituation such as knocking on doors, saying greetings, *salim*, asking for help, and saying thank you. The implementation of these activities involves a daily routine of reciting prayers before learning and *duba* prayer, while Quranic activities are conducted daily using the *yanbu'a* method. Quran teaching involves the use of shared props, and there are also private Quran sessions according to each child's ability. This is corroborated by informant M5's explanation that the *berinfaq* activity is carried out every Friday, with the funds collected used for a meal together once a month. *“Self-development, including knowing and memorizing the names of religions in Indonesia, understanding the religion adopted, learning Hijaiyah letters, memorizing short letters, daily prayers, and toyibah sentences. We also train them to give alms, every Friday.”*

Meanwhile, informant M6 a teacher at RA An Naafi Wonolopo Mijen Semarang City, stated that strengthening NAM skills based on the logic model begins with the preparation of introducing the concept of Islamic Religion and giving appeals related to prohibitions in religion. Efforts to familiarize reading prayers and applying mutual respect are also made at RA An Naafi. During the habituation process, the focus is on reciting prayers and memorizing supporting hadiths or selected verses from the Qur'an. The practice of worship and habituation to charity is also an integral part of this activity. The process involves reciting a prayer or hadith, followed by a simple explanation of its meaning so that children can understand it well. Informant M6 explained, *“During the habituation process, focus is given to reciting prayers and memorizing supporting hadiths or selected verses from the Qur'an. The practice of worship and the habituation of charity are also an integral part of this activity.”*

To support NAM-based learning in Raudhatul Aathfal, Ikatan Guru Raudhotul Atfal (IGRA), Semarang City also organizes joint Manasik Haji activities. On Islamic holidays, this activity involves a series of activities such as storytelling, watching movies together, and watching drama performances performed by representatives from one of the RA in turn. This activity is also used as a momentum to teach polite ethics to children, such as knocking on the door before entering the room, saying greetings, giving greetings, asking for help, and saying thank you. This is all part of the effort to provide a learning environment that supports and stimulates holistic child development.

Logic Model Analysis of Early Childhood Religious and Moral Values Development Program in Semarang City

Once the data is collected, the next step is to evaluate the program using a logic model analysis. This model is very suitable for evaluating early childhood religious and moral values development programs because it provides a clear structure for evaluating the existence of the NAM aspects of the program. In the context of developing religious and moral values, the logic model allows for a systematic evaluation of goals, teaching methods, and desired learning outcomes. By using formal logic, evaluators can identify the match between program objectives and expected achievements, as well as rationally analyze the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used. In addition, logic models can help reveal cause-and-effect relationships between program interventions and changes in behavior or moral understanding in early childhood. Thus, the logic model analysis provides a strong foundation for evaluating the success of the

Early Childhood Religious and Moral Values Development Program comprehensively and objectively.

Raudhatul Athfal institutions predominantly emphasize aspects of religious and moral values in their activities, making them a prominent characteristic. This becomes the main attraction offered to customers and potential customers. The focus on religious and moral values is an advantage highlighted by all RA to ensure that the final product has advantages in this aspect. For example, RA AN Naafi has successfully increased the level of juz 30 memorization in its students, an achievement that exceeds the average of other RA. This reflects the institution's commitment in providing strong and deep religious and moral education to the children who are part of its community.

Input

In developing religious and moral values, careful preparation is key. The available resources become the basic material for developing this aspect. Teachers or educators who are experts in the field of religion are the core, supported by religious materials, Islamic and universal values, as well as learning strategies and methods. The national curriculum, local content, and infrastructure including the Annual Program, Semester Program, Lesson Plan, and learning tools are important foundations. Learning tools specifically used in the aspect of religious and moral values include worship equipment, the Qur'an, prayer books, and various other supporting materials. In this context, educational institutions such as RA have prepared resources carefully and representatively. The involvement of religious foundations or religious social organizations provides a strong foundation for managing early childhood learning, especially in the aspect of religious and moral values.

Process (Activities)

In the learning process, activities related to NAM (Religious and Moral Norms) aspects are generally applied from the beginning to the end of learning. NAM aspects play an integral role in almost all learning themes. Activities begin with the habituation method carried out every morning before starting learning activities. The NAM aspect has become an important part of instilling some positive habits such as memorizing Asmaul Husna and short prayers, reciting the Quran, as well as fostering disciplinary values before and during the learning process. In addition, these activities also aim to familiarize polite attitudes toward teachers and peers, as well as respect for teachers and those who are older. These are some examples of activities that help integrate NAM aspects in every stage of learning, providing a solid moral foundation for students' holistic development.

Each Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institution involved in this study adopted varied strategies and approaches in the learning process to enrich the development aspects of Religious and Moral Values (NAM). In addition to delivering normative religious materials, RA also introduces and teaches religious content rooted in certain cultures and *manhajiyah*. For example, RA Al Hidayah Jarakah Ngaliyan introduces the practice of *tablil* once a week by simplifying some of the *tayyibah* sentences or not performing *tablil* in full as is commonly done. This approach is adapted to the conditions of Early Childhood who are not yet able to sit for long periods.

Output

The output in the logical model is the direct result of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) program in the RA educational institution. For example, the type, level and continuity of development activities focus on the aspect of Allah's Name Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Activities that focus on the NAM aspect tend to run smoothly and become a habit, as this aspect is the most expected to be mastered by most parents. Through various activities that focus on the NAM aspect in Early Childhood, students eventually get used to doing activities such as memorizing prayers, performing prayers, and remembering Asmaul Husna. From this habit, they are then able to memorize prayers and express their obedience through structured worship

practices.

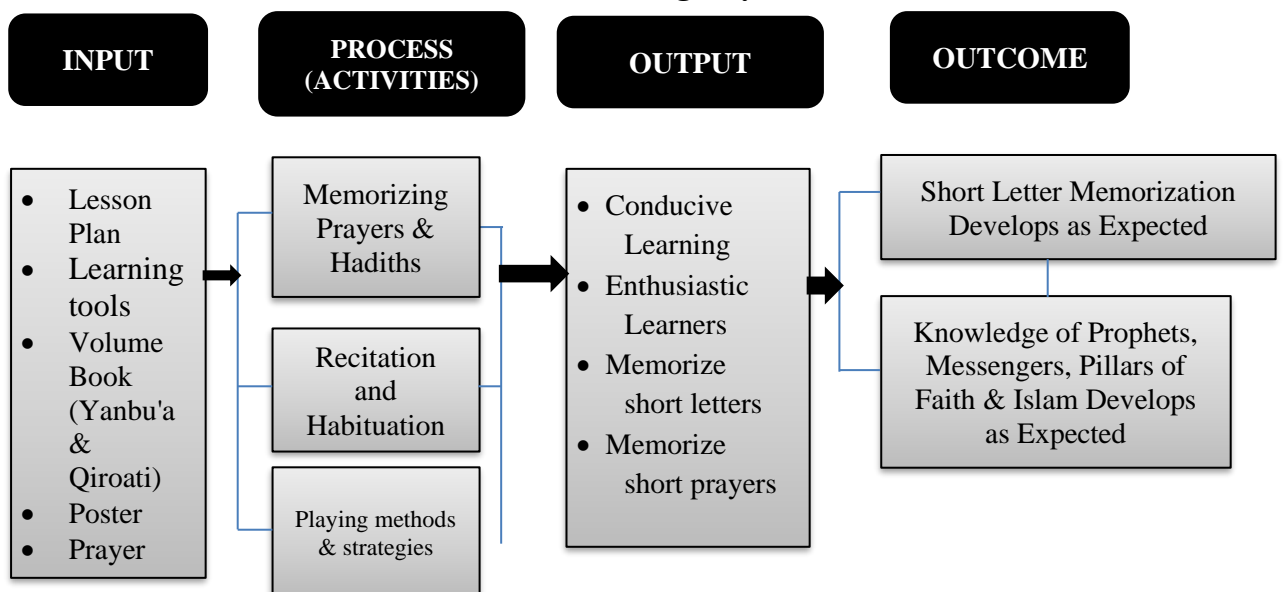
Outcome

The results of the development program on further aspects of NAM carried out by RA institutions are in the form of official development reports (report cards). Before the report is written in the report card, teachers in the classroom already have the results of NAM development activities in Early Childhood in the form of portfolio results, anecdotal notes, observation results, and the results of communication with parents. Short-term outcome results in the aspect of NAM, Early Childhood in RA are generally able to memorize short letters, and short prayers, recognize *hijaiyah* letters, practice prayers and ablutions, say greetings when meeting and entering the room, recognize the tradition of *tablil*, recognize Islamic holidays, recognize the month of Ramadan and Eid. In the moral aspect, Early Childhood is accustomed to shaking hands and kissing hands with teachers and parents, obeying teachers and parents, giving money, knocking on doors, and asking for help.

Some indicators of development in aspects in the odd semester began to appear and some have developed as expected. In the next development in even semesters, several achievement indicators have increased or changed for the better, such as in one of the group A students who in the odd semester memorized Surah al Maun and Surah Al Quraisy just starting to develop and in the next semester even semester has developed as expected. So the development program in the NAM aspect has visible results in the short term (odd semester) and medium term (even semester).

The characteristics of Early Childhood who tend to learn by imitating, make it easier for them to practice what their teachers do, such as practicing ablutions, compulsory prayers, dhuha prayers, and prayer readings. Especially for the ability to remember and memorize they are generally easier to do. But to construct religious and moral values requires practice that is done directly by them or learning by experience. So that it is easier to embed and imprint in Early Childhood. The program to instill the development of these values is usually grounded in real places, such as orphanages for the value of *sharing and infaq, and shodaqoh*.

Figure.1
Logic Model Evaluation of Religious & Moral Values Development Program in RA Semarang City.



DISCUSSION

This study shows that the implementation of religious and moral values-based learning for early childhood in Raudhotul Athfal Kota Semarang can be classified into two main aspects, namely religious values and moral reinforcement. In the context of religious values, children are introduced to religious symbols, light worship practices, and learning about aspects of spirituality. Students are encouraged to recognize and memorize Hijaiyah letters, short letters, and daily prayers, including *asmaul husna* and hadith. Special activities such as visits to places of worship are also part of this learning. Meanwhile, moral strengthening efforts are carried out through stories or fairy tales that contain moral messages and good values. Play activities according to the analysis Barnes²⁵ and Conroy J.C²⁶ should be designed to teach cooperation, honesty, and empathy, while anticipating future social vulnerability, identity confusion, and psychological instability. In addition, research conducted by Whitley, B.E., and Keith-Spiegel found that daily activities such as praying before and after learning, putting toys back in place, and not bothering friends also contribute to building children's moral character.²⁷ Discipline, manners, and respect for teachers are emphasized through school rules, the habit of sitting with a good attitude, and maintaining cleanliness.²⁸

To support NAM-based learning, this study shows that the school has designed comprehensive materials, including annual programs, semester programs, and daily activity plans. In addition, special activities such as memorizing short letters, worship practices, and visits to places of worship are an integral part of this education. The implementation of daily activities, such as reading prayers before learning, *duba* prayer, reciting the Quran, giving alms and praying together, provides a solid foundation for the moral and spiritual development of children in a conducive learning environment.²⁹

On the outcome aspect, this study shows that the cultivation of Religious and Moral Values (NAM) for early childhood offers measurable and comprehensive results in the development of character and spirituality. This development program culminates in an official progress report (Rapor). Previously, teachers have collected the results of NAM development activities in portfolios, anecdotal records, observations, and communication with parents. Short-term results show that young children in RA have been able to memorize short letters, and prayers, recognize *hijaiyah* letters, and perform prayers and ablutions. They also understand social etiquette such as shaking hands and saying greetings, and understand Islamic traditions and holidays. On the moral aspect, they are trained in manners such as shaking hands and kissing the hands of teachers and parents, obeying authority, giving alms, respecting privacy by

²⁵ Barnes, L.P. 'What has morality to do with religious education?', *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 32(2), pp. 131–141. (2011)

²⁶ Conroy, Lundie, and Baumfield, 'Failures of Meaning in Religious Education'.

²⁷ Whitley, B.E., and Keith-Spiegel, P. 'Academic Integrity as an Institutional Issue', *Ethics & Behavior*, 11(3), pp. 325–342. (2021) Available at: https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327019EB1103_9

²⁸ Habib Badawi, 'Exploring Classroom Discipline Strategies and Cultural Dynamics: Lessons from the Japanese Education System', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (4 January 2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i1.663>; Nurcholis Panji Bayu Astra, Erwin Hafid, and Alwan Suban, 'Scout Extracurricular Curriculum Management in Improving Student Discipline in Madrasah', *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (8 March 2024): 161–72, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i2.810>.

²⁹ Ion Croitoru and Heliana Munteanu, 'The Moral-Religious Education – A Support of Self-Conscience Training', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 116 (February 2014): 2155–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.536>; Hayuni Retno Widarti et al., 'Instagram-Based Learning Media: Improving Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes in Reaction Rate', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 1 (30 January 2024): 165–82, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i1.957>; Etharina Lathifah, M. Nurul Humaidi, and Mohammad Kamaludin, 'Implementing One Stop Schooling System Program in Reaching Graduate Standards of Santri at Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools', *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (23 July 2023): 166–79, <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v8i2.3715>.

knocking on the door, and having the awareness to ask for help when needed. This shows that the early cultivation of NAM provides a strong foundation for children's moral and spiritual development.³⁰

In addition, the aspect of Religious and Moral Values in early childhood has significant advantages in character building. Referring to the opinion that early childhood tends to learn by imitation, so they can easily practice what is taught by RA teachers in Semarang City, such as the practice of ablutions, compulsory prayers, *dhuba* prayers, and prayer readings. Their ability to remember and memorize also facilitates this learning process. However, to build religious and moral values more deeply, direct practice or learning through direct experience is needed³¹. This makes the values more easily embedded and imprinted in early childhood. This is in line with the study Sylva which explains that the values development program can be carried out by visiting places that are following the learning objectives, such as orphanages for the value of sharing and infaq, and other places to train the attitude of shodaqo.³² Thus, confirming the study Logue asserts that the cultivation of religious and moral values at an early age relies not only on imitation but also on direct experience, which helps to form a strong and responsible character in the future.³³

Using a logic model evaluation, this study shows that the cultivation of Religious and Moral Values (NAM) for early childhood still shows some weaknesses. The most prominent is the potential to blur children's understanding of these values into mere daily routines without deep understanding. Meanwhile, referring³⁴ to activities that are carried out repeatedly can make children tend to memorize without understanding their full meaning.³⁵ Thus, religious and moral values are less meaningfully internalized in daily life. On the other hand, if the approach used is not adapted to the psychological development of children, there is a risk that the activities can become monotonous and trigger enthusiasm in children towards learning religious and moral values.³⁶ It seems that Thompson's suggestion needs to be considered that a holistic and multifaceted approach should be taken into account to analyze children's individual needs and

³⁰ Ole Andreas Kvamme, 'The Significance of Context: Moral Education and Religious Education Facing the Challenge of Sustainability', *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education* 8, no. 2 (December 2017): 24–37, <https://doi.org/10.1515/dcse-2017-0013>.

³¹ Nida'ul Munafiah, Cucu Novianti, and Ferianto Ferianto, 'The Position of Teachers in the Development of Early Childhood Character Education', *Al-Athfaal: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 6, no. 1 (June 2023): 54–62, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajipaud.v6i1.15884>.

³² K. Sylva, 'Critical Periods in Childhood Learning?', *British Medical Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (January 1997): 185–97, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bmb.a011599>.

³³ Logue, M.E. (2007) 'Early Childhood Learning Standards: Tools for Promoting Social and Academic Success in Kindergarten', *Children & Schools*, 29(1), pp. 35–43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/29.1.35>

³⁴ Dwi Istiyani, 'Model Pembelajaran Membaca Menulis Menghitung (CaLisTung) Pada Anak Usia Dini Di Kabupaten Pekalongan', *Jurnal Penelitian* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v10i1.351>; Kenneth G. Tobin, ed., *The Practice of Constructivism in Science Education* (Routledge, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203053409>.

³⁵ Istiyani, 'Model Pembelajaran Membaca Menulis Menghitung (CaLisTung) Pada Anak Usia Dini Di Kabupaten Pekalongan'; Ainur Rofiq, Khoirun Nisa, and Abdul Muid, 'Innovation of Storytelling and Role-Playing Methods in Islamic Religious Education Learning', *Al-Tadzkiir: Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (4 March 2024): 47–58, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkiir.v3i1.52>; Nisa Fitriani, Syamsul Anam, and Asep Maulana, 'Building Literacy of Early Age Students' Language; Teacher Managerial Competence and Legal-Rational Authority of Boarding School Leaders', *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 41–50, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i1.707>.

³⁶ Xiuping Li and Joan Cutting, 'Rote Learning in Chinese Culture: Reflecting Active Confucian-Based Memory Strategies', in *Researching Chinese Learners* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 21–42, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230299481_2.

characteristics.³⁷ This is important to ensure that the cultivation of religious and moral values can occur effectively and sustainably.³⁸

In the next logic model analysis, this study contradicts Franklin's research showing that the approach of cultivating aspects of Religious and Moral Values (NAM) in early childhood through varied strategies always provides success.³⁹ On the contrary, this research provides the potential for fragmented and inconsistent teaching. Although RA presents normative religious materials and introduces religious content rooted in a particular culture and *manhajiyah*, such as simplified tahlil practices, this approach may result in children experiencing confusion in understanding the consistency and integrity of religious teachings. The possibility of in-depth or even distorted understanding as found by Brill & Brenière and Keith⁴⁰ may arise due to variations in teaching, which may not reach the level of clarity necessary for children to understand religious concepts and values thoroughly.

Based on some of the evaluation aspects found, early childhood education institutions in Semarang need to take several steps to address possible weaknesses. First, they should improve the qualifications and training of teaching staff to ensure they have a deep understanding of child development as well as appropriate teaching methodologies.⁴¹ In addition, these institutions should update their curriculum in line with current education standards. Curriculum updates according to the analysis Bijaou need to emphasize play and fun learning approaches.⁴² Furthermore, collaboration with parents also needs to be improved so that childcare and education can be well integrated between the home and educational institutions. Finally, the institution should conduct regular internal and external evaluations to identify areas of improvement and continuously improve the quality of its education services.⁴³

³⁷ Ji-Hi Bae, 'Learning to Teach Visual Arts in an Early Childhood Classroom: The Teacher's Role as a Guide', *Early Childhood Education Journal* 31, no. 4 (2003): 247–54, <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000024116.74292.56>.

³⁸ William D. Rohwer, 'Elaboration and Learning in Childhood and Adolescence', 1974, 1–57, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2407\(08\)60492-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2407(08)60492-9); Khasanah et al., 'Development of STEAM-Based Video Learning Media for Early Childhood Education with the Inclusion of Religious and Moral Values', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (27 February 2024): 136–52, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i1.717>; Nuriman Nuriman et al., 'A Study of Embracing Adolescent Islamic Moral Values at Two Schools in Rural Area', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 1 (30 January 2024): 117–36, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i1.1045>.

³⁹ Marvin Lazerson and Barry M. Franklin, 'From "Backwardness" to "At-Risk": Childhood Learning Difficulties and the Contradictions of School Reform', *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1995): 334, <https://doi.org/10.2307/369772>.

⁴⁰ Keith, K. (2005) 'Childhood Learning and the Distribution of Knowledge in Foraging Societies', *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, 15(1), pp. 27–40. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/ap3a.2005.15.27>

⁴¹ Bernard Spodek, 'The Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers', *Early Child Development and Care* 115, no. 1 (January 1996): 115–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443961150110>; Munafiah, Novianti, and Ferianto, 'The Position of Teachers in the Development of Early Childhood Character Education'.

⁴² Sidney W. Bijou, *Child Development: The Basic Stage of Early Childhood (The Century Psychology Series)* (Prentice Hall, 1976); Oskar G. Jenni and Mary A. Carskadon, 'Sleep Behavior and Sleep Regulation from Infancy through Adolescence: Normative Aspects', *Sleep Medicine Clinics* 2, no. 3 (September 2007): 321–29, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsmc.2007.05.001>; Thomas Suddendorf and Jonathan Redshaw, 'The Development of Mental Scenario Building and Episodic Foresight', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1296, no. 1 (August 2013): 135–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.12189>; Rocio Guil et al., 'Development of Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood: A Guide for Intervention', *Universitas Psychologica* 17, no. 4 (November 2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy17-4.diep>.

⁴³ Arlene Skolnick, 'The Limits of Childhood: Conceptions of Child Development and Social Context', *Law and Contemporary Problems* 39, no. 3 (1975): 38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1191268>; Wendy Sims-Schouten, Annie Skinner, and Kayleigh Rivett, 'Child Safeguarding Practices in Light of the Deserving/Undeserving Paradigm: A Historical & Contemporary Analysis', *Child Abuse & Neglect* 94 (August 2019): 104025, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104025>.

With these measures, early childhood education institutions in Semarang can continue to improve the quality of education they offer to the younger generation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that early childhood learning in Raudhotul Athfal Kota Semarang involves two main aspects which include religious values and moral reinforcement. Religious values involve understanding religious symbols, light worship practices, as well as memorizing short letters, hadith, and daily prayers. Meanwhile, moral reinforcement is done through fairy tales that contain moral messages and good values. Both are implemented with variations depending on the needs of each school. However, the research also revealed some weaknesses in the implementation of these values. Routine activities can obscure children's understanding, while approaches that are not in line with children's psychological development can lead to disorientation and confusion. Variations in teaching can also result in an in-depth or distorted understanding of religious values. Therefore, there is a need for improvements in teaching approaches and strategies to ensure that religious and moral values can be effectively and sustainably applied in early childhood learning.

While this study has uncovered some aspects that educational institutions should consider, it has limitations in terms of generalizability as it was only conducted in a few schools in Semarang City. As a result of the limited data, the results of this study may not be representative of the diversity of values, social backgrounds, or cultural contexts that exist in other areas. These factors may reduce the level of confidence in the generalizability of the results. To address this weakness in the future, it is important to expand the scope of the study by involving more schools from different geographical areas and demographic backgrounds. Diversifying the sample will help ensure a better representation of various social and cultural contexts so that the results of the study can be more generalized and relevant to the early childhood population at large. In addition, considering a more holistic methodological approach that takes into account the dynamics of school, family and community environments may provide deeper insights into how religious and moral values are implemented and understood by young children.

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