

Fostering Religious and Creative Character Education through Daily Routines for Early Childhood

¹Siti Qamariyah, ²M. Zuhdi Zainul Majdi
sitiqamariyah472@gmail.com, zainulmajdi930@gmail.com
¹²Institut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi Pancor, Indonesia

Abstract

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The formation of religious character and the development of creativity in early childhood are crucial aspects of education, as this period serves as a strategic stage for instilling positive values through consistent habituation. Daily school routines can serve as a means to integrate religious values and creativity development into the learning process. This study aims to describe religious habituation activities that shape children's religious character, identify creativity-fostering activities that support character formation, and analyze the teacher's role in developing both aspects in young children. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, involving five informants: the Class B1 teacher, the school principal, and the assistant teachers for classes B2, B3, and B4. Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results indicate that religious character formation is achieved through habits such as praying before and after activities, exchanging greetings, reciting prayers and short Quranic surahs, practicing polite behavior, and showing respect and helpfulness toward others. Meanwhile, creativity is developed through activities such as drawing, coloring, singing, role-playing, creating artworks, and independently exploring ideas. Throughout this process, teachers act as role models, guides, motivators, and facilitators who create an enjoyable learning environment. The study concludes that consistent routine habituation can support religious character formation while simultaneously providing space for the development of creativity in early childhood.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents a stage of rapid growth and development across physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, linguistic, moral, and spiritual domains. This period is known as the "golden age" because it offers a strategic opportunity for parents and educators to stimulate a child's various potentials, laying the foundation for development in subsequent stages. Hasanah et al. (2025) explain that early childhood is a crucial period for stimulating a child's growth and development to support their future life. Consequently, early childhood education focuses not only on developing academic skills but also on character building, the instilling of moral values, and the fostering of creativity through learning experiences appropriate to the child's developmental stage.

Character education is a vital component of early childhood education, as it plays a role in shaping habits of thought, attitude, and action. Budiman and Karyati (2021) explain that character development is a continuous process that unfolds throughout a person's life. In an educational context, character is not formed instantly; rather, it develops through experience, role modeling, environmental influences, and the consistent practice of habits. Furba and Tarigan (2026) suggest that character relates to moral and ethical qualities reflected in habits of thinking, behaving, and acting. Thus, character education in early childhood must be implemented through concrete activities that enable children to recognize, understand, and practice positive values in their daily lives.

One aspect of character that is important to cultivate from an early age is religious character. Religious character relates to the recognition and application of religious values reflected in daily behavior—such as praying, behaving politely, respecting others, showing care, and practicing good habits. Henda (2026) asserts that religious character is not formed solely through the delivery of advice, but also through habits, role modeling, and an environment that supports the development of such behavior. In early childhood education, religious values need to be introduced through simple, concrete, and repetitive activities to align with a child's ability to comprehend the experiences around them. Similarly, Yanti et al. (2023) explain that religious character is linked to identity, obedience, and Islamic values reflected in an individual's behavior. Instilling religious character from an early age is expected to serve as a foundation for a child's moral and spiritual development, as well as their discipline and social awareness.

In addition to religious character, creativity is a crucial aspect to be nurtured in early childhood education. Creativity is not limited to the ability to produce artwork; it also encompasses the capacity to imagine, explore the environment, articulate ideas, experiment with various alternatives, and create

something based on the child's own experiences and understanding. Natty et al. (2019) explain that creative character relates to an individual's ability to generate new and innovative ideas or works. Meanwhile, Nuryati and Hufad (2026) emphasize the importance of creativity in creating early childhood learning environments that are inclusive and responsive to diversity. Creativity can be fostered through activities such as drawing, coloring, singing, role-playing, dancing, using educational play materials, and creating projects using locally available materials. Through these activities, children have the opportunity to develop their imaginations, express themselves, and explore various possibilities appropriate to their developmental stages.

The importance of developing religious character and creativity highlights the need for early childhood education to integrate the instilling of moral and religious values with learning experiences that allow space for children's exploration. Religious character education helps children understand values of goodness and incorporate them into their daily lives, while creativity development offers opportunities for children to cultivate ideas, imagination, and self-expression. These two aspects need not be developed in isolation; rather, they can be integrated into learning activities and daily routines. For instance, group prayer can instill religious habits, whereas activities such as creating art, singing, and role-playing provide scope for children's creativity. Such integration requires activity planning tailored to children's developmental needs, alongside teacher support in fostering a conducive learning environment.

One strategy for developing both aspects is the cultivation of habits through daily routines. Daily routines consist of a series of activities performed repeatedly and with relative consistency within the child's school life. Through repetition and the modeling of behavior, children gain opportunities to recognize and practice positive behaviors in various situations. Darmawan et al. (2026) explain that consistently integrating religious habituation and creativity into daily routines can support the implementation of character education. Research by Asnaeni et al. (2023) also demonstrates that morning habituation activities—such as memorizing short Quranic surahs, reciting daily prayers, performing Duha (mid-morning) prayers, and making charitable contributions—can serve as a means to instill character values in children. These findings indicate that daily routines have the potential to serve as a vehicle for character education when designed in alignment with learning objectives and implemented consistently.

In fostering religious character, daily routines can be realized through activities such as exchanging greetings, praying before and after activities, reading short surahs, reciting simple hadiths, chanting salawat (prayers upon the Prophet), and practicing polite behavior and mutual assistance. Meanwhile,

creativity can be developed through art activities, educational games, material exploration, and tasks that encourage children to create works based on their own ideas. Muslimin et al. (2025) explain that art activities provide children with opportunities to express ideas and emotions, recognize colors and shapes, and experiment with various methods of creation. Thus, daily routines do not merely serve to organize children's activities; they can also become an integral part of the learning process, combining the formation of religious character with the development of creativity.

The success of these habituation efforts also depends on the teacher's role as a role model, guide, motivator, and facilitator. Teachers do more than simply deliver instructions; they model behaviors that children can emulate, offer guidance when children encounter difficulties, and create a learning environment that fosters active participation. In fostering religious character, teachers can model polite behavior, guide religious activities, and encourage children to respect and assist their peers. To develop creativity, teachers need to provide opportunities for children to explore materials, express ideas, experiment with different approaches, and create work suited to their abilities. Therefore, the effectiveness of habit-forming practices depends not only on the frequency of activities but also on the quality of guidance, the teacher's example, and the opportunities provided for children to engage actively.

Initial observations at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong, Pringgabaya, revealed that religious character building and creativity development are implemented through various routine school activities. Regarding religious aspects, habituation begins the moment children arrive at school, with greetings and handshakes exchanged with teachers. Before core lessons commence, children participate in Iqra recitation, group prayers, the reading of short Surahs and simple Hadiths, the recitation of daily prayers and Sholawat (prayers upon the Prophet), and physical activities such as calisthenics. These activities allow children to become familiar with and practice religious values within the school routine. Furthermore, the cultivation of polite behavior and positive interactions with teachers and peers forms part of the social experience that supports character development.

Regarding creativity, preliminary observations indicate that teachers provide opportunities for children to engage in coloring, paper crafts, balloon arrangements, singing, role-playing, and creating various shapes using materials available in the school environment. Teachers also provide educational play materials—both traditional and modern—and involve children in dance activities. These diverse activities offer space for children to participate, explore materials, and express ideas according to their individual abilities. The inclusion of religious and creative activities in the school routine demonstrates an effort to

integrate the instilling of religious values with the development of children's potential. However, the implementation of these activities requires further examination to understand how habituation is practiced, how teachers fulfill their roles, and how routine activities support the formation of religious character and the development of children's creativity.

Several previous studies have addressed religious character education and creativity in early childhood. Asnaeni et al. (2023), for instance, examined religious character formation through morning activities that include memorizing short Quranic chapters, reciting daily prayers, performing Duha (mid-morning) prayers, and making charitable contributions (infak). Darmawan et al. (2026) highlighted the integration of religious and creative habits into daily routines, while Muslimin et al. (2025) discussed the contribution of art activities to the development of children's creativity. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the importance of habituation and creative activities in early childhood education. Nevertheless, this study is specifically directed at examining the implementation of religious character habituation and creativity development through daily routines at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong, Pringgabaya, focusing on the forms of activities and the teachers' roles in the process.

This focus is expected to provide a contextual overview of how these two aspects of character education are implemented in the daily activities of an early childhood education institution. Based on the foregoing, this study aims to describe religious habituation activities in shaping children's religious character, identify creativity-fostering activities implemented through daily routines, and analyze the teacher's role in supporting the formation of religious character and the development of creativity in early childhood students at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong, Pringgabaya. This research is expected to contribute to the development of early childhood education practices, particularly in designing daily routines that not only support the instilling of religious values but also provide space for children to imagine, explore, and express their creativity optimally.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to understand the cultivation of religious character education and creativity through daily routines in early childhood. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand phenomena within their natural context, while the case study design allows for an in-depth examination of the phenomena (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Prihatsanti et al., 2018). The research was conducted at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong Pringgabaya, focusing on Group B1, which consists of 13 children. The research subjects included the Group B1 teacher, the school

principal, and three assisting teachers from Groups B2, B3, and B4. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on the relevance of their experience and roles to the research objectives (Lenaini, 2021).

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on daily routines, learning activities, and interactions between teachers and children. Interviews were conducted with the class teacher, principal, and assisting teachers, while documentation included daily journals, activity photographs, and child development records (Ardiansyah, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023). The researcher adopted the role of an "observer-as-participant" (limited involvement) to maintain the naturalness of the research setting. Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong in Pringgabaya Village, Pringgabaya District, East Lombok Regency. The research focused on fostering religious character and creativity in early childhood through daily routines, as well as the teacher's role in supporting the success of this process. The findings indicate that religious character building was achieved through repetitive activities integrated into daily life, while creativity was developed through play, creative projects, environmental exploration, and the use of diverse learning media. The success of both aspects was significantly influenced by the teacher's role as a role model, guide, facilitator, motivator, and evaluator.

Cultivating Religious Character Education in Early Childhood

Research findings indicate that the cultivation of religious character education at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong is carried out consistently through various daily routines. These activities include exchanging greetings and handshakes, Quranic recitation before entering the classroom, communal prayer, reciting short Surahs, reciting short Hadiths accompanied by physical gestures, reciting shalawat (prayers upon the Prophet) and daily supplications, maintaining cleanliness, and participating in "Jumat Berkah" (Blessed Friday) activities. These practices aim to instill religious values from an early age through repetitive experiences, ensuring that religious values are not merely understood verbally but are also embodied in daily behavior.

Interview findings reveal that religious habituation extends beyond ritual activities. Teachers also link religious values to concrete behaviors—such as maintaining cleanliness, disposing of trash properly, praying before starting activities, and encouraging children to give infaq (voluntary charity). Teacher role-modeling plays a crucial part in this process; teachers do not simply issue instructions but first demonstrate the expected behaviors, providing children

with tangible examples to emulate. This approach demonstrates that religious character formation occurs through a combination of repetition, role-modeling, and the application of religious values in everyday life.

The "Jumat Berkah" activity is also a vital component of religious character cultivation. This program encompasses the recitation of Surah Yasin and the Asmaul Husna (Beautiful Names of Allah), dhikr (remembrance of Allah), faith and piety (imtaq) activities, infaq, and the practice of Dhuha prayer. This series of activities not only introduces children to acts of worship but also fosters spiritual and social values—such as remembering Allah, practicing gratitude, sharing with others, and understanding forms of worship beyond the obligatory prayers. Thus, religious habituation at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong goes beyond rote memorization; it is directed toward shaping attitudes and habits that support the child's character development.



Documentation of Religious Character Education Practices for Early Childhood

These findings align with research by Sulyandari (2026), which demonstrates that the consistent practice of established routines can reinforce children's moral and religious values through activities such as prayer, maintaining cleanliness, practicing politeness, and memorizing daily prayers. These results are further supported by Asnaeni et al. (2023), who found that morning activities—such as memorizing short Quranic chapters, reciting daily prayers, performing Dhuha (mid-morning) prayers, and making charitable contributions (infaq)—can foster traits of discipline, independence, and honesty. Sari et al. (2024) also emphasize that the effectiveness of this habituation method relies heavily on teachers setting a good example, the structured repetition of activities, and collaboration between the school and the family. Thus, these research findings reinforce the view that religious character in early childhood is most effectively shaped through experiences that are carried out consistently and repeatedly.

Fostering Creativity to Shape Children's Religious Character

Research findings indicate that the development of children's creativity is achieved through various exploratory and enjoyable activities. These activities

include coloring with diverse media, creating art from natural materials and paper, arranging shapes, role-playing, singing, using traditional and modern educational toys, and participating in dance. Creativity is not directed solely toward the ability to produce artworks; it also serves as a means to instill religious values such as gratitude, discipline, responsibility, honesty, caring, and appreciation for God's creation.

Coloring activities, for instance, go beyond the use of crayons or colored pencils to incorporate food coloring, paint, leaves, and other natural materials. This variety of media provides children with the space to explore while simultaneously developing self-confidence, independence, and a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, direct learning in the surrounding environment is used to introduce children to nature and God's creation. By observing plants, animals, or the local environment, teachers link learning experiences to values such as gratitude and environmental stewardship.

Games also serve as a vital tool for developing both creativity and character. Through traditional and modern games, children learn about honesty, responsibility, togetherness, discipline, and the ability to take turns. Allowing children to choose the games or materials they prefer also fosters independence and creativity. Thus, in this study, creativity is not viewed as a standalone skill but rather as a medium for cultivating various character values through play and exploration.

These findings align with Irna (2024), who emphasizes the importance of giving children opportunities to take action, solve problems, ask questions, and discover new things. Darmawan et al. (2026) also demonstrate that outdoor learning activities can enhance creativity while shaping children's character. Meanwhile, Setiawan et al. (2022) demonstrate that art activities contribute to the development of children's visual-spatial, musical, and kinesthetic intelligence, as well as their cognitive, communication, and social skills. Thus, these findings reinforce the view that contextual and varied creative activities can serve as effective media for supporting the character development and potential of early childhood children.

The Role of Teachers in Shaping Children's Religious Character and Creativity

Research findings indicate that teachers play a central role in shaping children's religious character and creativity. The first role is that of a role model. Young children tend to imitate the behaviors they observe; therefore, teachers need to demonstrate positive habits such as offering greetings, praying, speaking politely, maintaining cleanliness, respecting others, being honest, and acting responsibly. This modeling ensures that character education takes place through tangible examples rather than mere instruction.

The second role involves integrating religious values into creative activities. Teachers link play and creative work with religious values—for example, by drawing mosques, creating collages themed around God's creations, singing religious songs, crafting items from natural materials, or role-playing scenarios about helping one another. This approach demonstrates that religious character education and creativity need not be taught in isolation but can be developed simultaneously within a single learning experience.

The third role is that of a guide and habit-former. Teachers consistently encourage children to adopt habits such as praying, memorizing prayers and short Quranic chapters, offering greetings, sharing, expressing gratitude, and maintaining cleanliness. The fourth role is that of a creativity facilitator, providing various materials and media that allow children to explore according to their imaginations and developmental stages. In these activities, teachers give children the space to experiment, make choices, and produce work based on their own ideas.

Additionally, teachers act as motivators, observers, and evaluators. Motivation is provided through praise and appreciation of the children's efforts, helping them feel valued and encouraged to keep trying. As observers and evaluators, teachers monitor the development of both religious habits and creativity through daily activities—observing traits such as the confidence to express ideas, the ability to complete tasks, and habits regarding prayer, sharing, and responsibility. These observations are then used to determine the appropriate subsequent learning stimulation for each child's specific needs. These findings align with Nuranisah and Hijriyani (2022), who explain that teachers act as educators and instructors by creating space for children to be creative, stimulating their imaginations, and offering appreciation.

Ilam et al. (2025) also emphasize the central role teachers play in shaping religious character through strategies involving role modeling, habituation, motivation, and contextual learning. Mufarrohah et al. (2025) reinforce these findings by demonstrating that teachers, acting as living examples, significantly influence the development of polite behavior through tangible actions, positive reinforcement, and role modeling in various social situations. Thus, the successful development of children's religious character and creativity depends not only on the types of activities provided but also on the quality of teacher engagement in supporting the children's learning process.

Overall, the research results indicate that the development of religious character and creativity among early childhood students at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong occurs through an interconnected process. Religious habituation establishes a foundation of values and behaviors, while creative activities provide space for exploration and self-expression; teachers serve as the link between

these two aspects. Consequently, religious character education and creativity development do not take place in isolation but evolve through consistent habituation, contextual learning experiences, and the teacher's role as a role model in daily life.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on research regarding the cultivation of religious and creative character through daily routines for early childhood students at RA Baiturrahim NW Belawong Pringgabaya, it can be concluded that religious character formation is achieved through activities carried out routinely and consistently. These include exchanging greetings and handshakes, reciting the Quran before class, praying before activities, reciting short Surahs and Hadiths, chanting shalawat (prayers upon the Prophet), maintaining cleanliness, and participating in "Blessed Friday" (Jumat Berkah) activities—which encompass the recitation of Surah Yasin and Asmaul Husna (the Beautiful Names of Allah), dhikr (remembrance of God), faith and piety (imtaq) sessions, charitable giving (infaq), and the practice of Dhuha prayer. These habitual practices help children both recognize and apply religious values in their daily lives, such as discipline, responsibility, caring, honesty, cleanliness, and gratitude.

Creativity is fostered through various activities that allow children to explore and express their ideas. Examples include coloring with diverse media, creating artworks from materials found in the surrounding environment, using both traditional and modern educational play tools (APE), role-playing, singing, dancing, directly observing the environment, and engaging in simple activities like planting. These creative activities not only develop imagination, independence, and exploratory skills but also serve as a means to instill religious values—such as gratitude, responsibility, caring, and appreciation for God's creation. Throughout this process, teachers play a crucial role as role models, guides, facilitators, motivators, observers, and evaluators. Thus, consistent habituation, contextual creative activities, and active teacher involvement act as mutually reinforcing elements in shaping the religious character and creativity of early childhood students.

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