



Implementing Islamic Singing Activities to Instill Moral Values: A Qualitative Case Study at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten, Muara Bulian

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Abstract

Moral education in early childhood requires instructional approaches that are developmentally appropriate and capable of transforming moral concepts into everyday behaviors. This study aimed to explore how Islamic singing activities were implemented to instill moral values at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten, Muara Bulian, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive case study was employed involving the school principal, one classroom teacher, and fourteen Group B children selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings revealed that the implementation of Islamic singing activities followed four interconnected stages: instructional planning, classroom implementation, behavioral habituation, and evaluation. Teachers integrated meaningful song lyrics with body movements, behavioral modeling, reflective discussions, and continuous reinforcement both in school and at home. These practices promoted children's active participation and contributed to observable improvements in moral behaviors, including greeting others politely, praying before and after learning activities, respecting teachers, maintaining classroom discipline, and demonstrating responsibility in daily interactions. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the pedagogical processes through which Islamic singing activities facilitate moral value internalization rather than merely emphasizing learning outcomes. The findings provide practical guidance for teachers and school leaders in designing enjoyable, culturally relevant, and value-based learning experiences to strengthen character education in early childhood settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents a formative period during which fundamental cognitive, social, emotional, and moral capacities are established through continuous interaction with family, school, and the broader social environment (Mahoney et al., 2021). Moral development during this stage is particularly significant because children begin to recognize acceptable behaviors, internalize social norms, and develop habits that may persist into adulthood (Turiel, 2024). Nevertheless, the cultivation of moral values among young children has become increasingly challenging in contemporary society due to rapid technological advancement, changing family dynamics, and the growing influence of digital media on children's daily experiences. While digital technologies provide opportunities for learning and communication, they also expose children to behavioral models that may conflict with ethical and religious principles when appropriate guidance is lacking (Zahra, 2025). Consequently, educational institutions are expected not only to promote academic readiness but also to establish strong moral foundations that enable children to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. In Islamic early childhood education, moral formation is inseparable from religious education because Islamic values provide practical guidance for everyday conduct through habits of worship, respect, honesty, responsibility, and compassion toward others. Despite this expectation, many educational practices continue to prioritize cognitive achievement over

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systematic character formation, creating an imbalance between children's intellectual growth and moral development (Azhari et al., 2026; Mushawir et al., 2025). This condition highlights the necessity of identifying instructional approaches that are developmentally appropriate, enjoyable, and capable of integrating religious values into children's everyday learning experiences.

The challenge of strengthening moral education has become increasingly evident in many early childhood education settings, where positive behavioral habits are not consistently reflected in children's daily interactions despite regular exposure to religious instruction. Teachers frequently report that children are able to memorize prayers, songs, or religious expressions but still experience difficulties applying these values in authentic social situations, such as sharing with peers, respecting classroom rules, telling the truth, or demonstrating empathy toward others. This discrepancy indicates that memorization alone is insufficient to foster meaningful moral internalization because young children primarily learn through repeated experiences, observation, and direct participation rather than through abstract explanations. Educational psychologists have long emphasized that children construct moral understanding through active engagement with their environment, where enjoyable learning activities play an essential role in reinforcing desirable behavior (Gamage et al., 2021). Therefore, early childhood learning environments require instructional strategies that combine emotional engagement, repetition, behavioral modeling, and meaningful interaction to transform moral concepts into habitual actions (Ramona & Cholimah, 2025; Zembylas, 2021). Among various pedagogical approaches, music-based learning has attracted growing attention because singing naturally accommodates children's developmental characteristics by integrating movement, language, emotion, and social participation within a single learning activity. Accordingly, the educational value of singing extends beyond entertainment, functioning as an instructional medium through which moral messages can be repeatedly introduced, practiced, and gradually embedded into children's daily behavior (Elmer & Stefanie, 2021; Yuriananta et al., 2026). These circumstances reinforce the importance of examining how singing activities can contribute to sustainable moral development within Islamic early childhood education.

Within Islamic educational contexts, songs containing religious messages have increasingly been incorporated into classroom instruction as an accessible medium for introducing moral principles in ways that are enjoyable and meaningful for young learners (Aziz et al., 2025). Islamic songs commonly convey values such as gratitude, honesty, discipline, respect for parents and teachers, cleanliness, cooperation, and devotion to God through simple language and memorable melodies that correspond to children's developmental abilities (Sari & Ismaraidha, 2025). Because young children naturally respond to rhythm, repetition, and movement, singing provides opportunities for repeated exposure to positive messages without creating the pressure often associated with conventional teacher-centered instruction (Qizi & Ismoilova, 2026). Repetition of meaningful lyrics, accompanied by gestures and teacher explanations, may strengthen children's comprehension while simultaneously encouraging the formation of positive habits through daily practice. Moreover, the effectiveness of singing activities becomes greater when teachers intentionally connect the moral content of songs with children's real-life experiences, allowing abstract values to become concrete through observation and imitation (Kurniati & Darajaatul, 2024). Such integration reflects the principles of experiential and value-based learning, in which moral education is achieved through continuous interaction among instruction, practice, and social reinforcement rather than through isolated classroom activities. Considering that character formation is a gradual process requiring consistency across learning environments, understanding how Islamic singing activities are implemented in authentic educational settings becomes increasingly important for both educational theory and classroom practice (Fadhillah et al., 2025). Consequently, exploring the instructional processes through which Islamic songs facilitate the internalization of moral values represents a timely and relevant area of investigation in contemporary early childhood education.

Although the importance of moral education in early childhood has been widely acknowledged, determining instructional strategies that effectively translate moral concepts into consistent daily behavior remains a persistent educational challenge. Researchers increasingly argue that meaningful character education requires learning experiences that actively engage children cognitively, emotionally, and socially rather than relying solely on verbal instruction or rule memorization (Watanabe, 2025). Within Islamic early childhood education, this challenge becomes

even more significant because moral values are closely connected to religious practices that should be reflected in children's everyday interactions. Consequently, educators are encouraged to adopt instructional approaches that simultaneously nurture knowledge, emotional attachment, and behavioral habituation (Irfani et al., 2025). Singing activities have emerged as one promising alternative because they naturally integrate language, movement, repetition, and emotional expression into a unified learning experience. However, the educational effectiveness of singing depends not merely on the activity itself but also on how teachers organize learning, explain moral meanings, provide behavioral models, and reinforce positive habits both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, understanding the implementation process underlying Islamic singing activities is essential for explaining why similar instructional approaches may produce different educational outcomes across learning contexts. Such understanding is particularly valuable for developing evidence-based instructional practices that strengthen moral education in Islamic early childhood institutions.

A growing body of literature has reported the educational benefits of music and singing for promoting religious and moral development among young children. Suharsiwi et al. (2024) found that Islamic songs effectively encouraged children's participation while facilitating the introduction of religious values through enjoyable classroom activities. Similarly, Loka & Ichsan (2022) demonstrated that singing methods increased children's enthusiasm for learning Islamic education because musical activities corresponded closely with their developmental characteristics. Saputri et al. (2026) further showed that repeated Islamic singing supported the development of religious habits, including praying, greeting others politely, and demonstrating respect toward teachers. Other studies have emphasized that the cultivation of religious values becomes more effective when singing is accompanied by habituation and continuous behavioral reinforcement. Research on character education has likewise highlighted the importance of teacher modeling, positive classroom culture, and consistent practice in shaping children's moral behavior (Anisah, 2023). Beyond Islamic education, broader investigations into early childhood learning consistently indicate that play-based, interactive, and emotionally engaging pedagogies enhance children's motivation and facilitate deeper value internalization (Hamid & Bakar, 2026; Novanto et al., 2026). Collectively, these studies suggest that Islamic singing activities possess considerable potential as an instructional medium for character education (Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025; Sauri et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the dominant emphasis within existing scholarship has remained on evaluating educational outcomes rather than explaining the instructional mechanisms through which moral values become internalized during classroom practice.

Despite these valuable contributions, several important limitations remain insufficiently addressed in the existing literature. First, previous studies have predominantly evaluated the effectiveness of singing activities by measuring improvements in children's religious or moral behavior, while providing only limited discussion of how teachers design, implement, and evaluate these activities within authentic classroom settings (Kim, 2024). Second, relatively few studies have examined the instructional sequence through which song selection, teacher explanation, behavioral modeling, repeated practice, and family involvement interact to facilitate children's moral internalization as a coherent educational process (Hariani et al., 2022). Third, the relationship between classroom implementation and children's everyday behavioral transformation remains underexplored, leaving uncertainty regarding how moral messages embedded in Islamic songs are translated into habitual actions beyond the learning session itself (VanderMeulen, 2025). Furthermore, evidence derived from Islamic-based kindergartens in Indonesia remains relatively limited, particularly studies that document implementation practices from multiple educational perspectives, including teachers, school leaders, and classroom observations. These limitations indicate that current knowledge remains fragmented, emphasizing educational outcomes while overlooking the pedagogical processes that generate those outcomes (Marini et al., 2026; Vorobyeva et al., 2025). Addressing this gap is important because understanding implementation mechanisms can provide stronger theoretical explanations and more practical guidance for educators seeking to integrate Islamic singing activities into sustainable character education programs (Dong et al., 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2026). Accordingly, the present study seeks to extend existing scholarship by examining Islamic singing activities not merely as an instructional medium but as a comprehensive

pedagogical process through which moral values are intentionally introduced, modeled, reinforced, and gradually internalized in early childhood education.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the implementation of Islamic singing activities in fostering moral values among children at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten, Muara Bulian, Indonesia. Rather than concentrating solely on whether singing activities improve children's moral development, the present study investigates how these activities are systematically planned, implemented, reinforced, and evaluated within everyday classroom practice. Specifically, the research explores the instructional processes through which teachers integrate meaningful song lyrics, behavioral modeling, repeated habituation, and collaboration with families to facilitate the internalization of moral values in early childhood. In doing so, this study addresses an important gap in the existing literature by shifting attention from educational outcomes to the pedagogical mechanisms that underlie successful moral learning. Theoretically, the findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on early childhood moral education by providing a contextual understanding of Islamic singing activities as a holistic pedagogical process that combines cognitive, emotional, social, and religious dimensions of learning. The study also extends previous research by proposing an implementation framework that illustrates the interconnected roles of instructional planning, teacher facilitation, behavioral habituation, and parental reinforcement in supporting children's moral development. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide evidence-based guidance for early childhood educators, school leaders, and curriculum developers seeking to design character education programs that are developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and sustainable within Islamic educational settings. Ultimately, this research contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen value-based education by demonstrating how enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences can support the long-term formation of children's moral character through everyday educational practice.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study to investigate the implementation of Islamic singing activities in fostering moral values among young children at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten, Muara Bulian, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the primary objective of the study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of naturally occurring educational practices rather than to measure causal relationships or test predetermined hypotheses. The descriptive case study design enabled the researchers to explore the phenomenon within its authentic educational setting by examining interactions among teachers, children, classroom activities, and the broader school environment. This design was considered appropriate because the implementation of Islamic singing activities is context-dependent and cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measurement alone. Furthermore, qualitative inquiry allowed the researchers to interpret participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors from multiple perspectives, thereby generating a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical processes involved in moral value internalization. The study was conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that educational realities are socially constructed through continuous interaction between individuals and their learning environments. Throughout the investigation, the researchers functioned as the primary research instruments while maintaining reflexivity to minimize subjective bias and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Research Setting and Period

The study was conducted at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten, an Islamic-based early childhood education institution located in Napal Sisik Village, Muara Bulian District, Batang Hari Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. The research site was selected purposively because the institution systematically integrates Islamic singing activities into its daily learning program as part of its religious and character education curriculum. Preliminary observations indicated that Islamic songs were consistently incorporated into the opening, core, and closing phases of classroom instruction, providing a rich educational context for investigating how moral values are introduced and reinforced through singing activities. Data collection was undertaken over a three-month period, from February to April 2026, allowing prolonged engagement with participants and repeated

classroom observations. Conducting the research over multiple instructional sessions enabled the researchers to observe recurring learning patterns, teacher practices, and children's behavioral development within their natural educational environment.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants consisted of one school principal, one Group B classroom teacher, and fourteen children enrolled in Group B, resulting in a total of sixteen participants directly involved in the research. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is widely recommended in qualitative research for identifying information-rich cases capable of providing detailed insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria required participants to be actively involved in the planning, implementation, or participation of Islamic singing activities conducted within the classroom. The principal was selected because of responsibility for curriculum implementation and institutional policy, whereas the classroom teacher served as the primary informant due to direct involvement in planning and facilitating the instructional activities. The fourteen children were included because they represented the primary recipients of the educational program and provided observable evidence of moral value internalization through classroom participation and daily behavior. Since every individual directly involved in the instructional process contributed essential information, no exclusion criteria were applied.

Research Instruments

The researchers served as the primary research instruments and were supported by several structured instruments developed to facilitate systematic data collection. Three complementary techniques were employed: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The observation guide focused on four principal dimensions: instructional planning, implementation of Islamic singing activities, teacher modeling and reinforcement strategies, and children's manifestations of moral behavior during classroom learning. Semi-structured interview protocols were developed separately for the principal and classroom teacher to explore instructional planning, learning implementation, evaluation strategies, perceived effectiveness, encountered challenges, and collaboration with parents. Documentary evidence included teaching modules, daily lesson plans, school profiles, children's developmental records, attendance documents, photographs of learning activities, and other institutional records relevant to the study. The observation indicators and interview questions were developed based on contemporary literature concerning early childhood moral education, Islamic character education, and qualitative educational research to ensure conceptual alignment with the objectives of the study.

Instrument Validity and Trustworthiness

The credibility of the research instruments was established through expert judgment involving two senior academics specializing in early childhood education and qualitative educational research. The experts evaluated the clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and consistency of each observation indicator and interview question with respect to the research objectives. Their recommendations were subsequently incorporated to improve the wording, sequencing, and content coverage of the research instruments before field implementation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopted the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data sources and collection techniques, and member checking conducted with the principal and classroom teacher following preliminary interpretation of the findings. Transferability was supported through detailed contextual descriptions of the research setting and participants. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining comprehensive documentation of research procedures, while confirmability was ensured through an audit trail that documented analytical decisions and researcher reflections throughout the investigation.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted systematically through four sequential stages. The first stage involved obtaining institutional permission, identifying participants, preparing research instruments, and conducting preliminary classroom observations to establish rapport with participants and familiarize the researchers with the instructional environment. During the second

stage, participant observations were undertaken repeatedly during Islamic singing activities implemented in the opening, core, and closing phases of classroom instruction. The researchers documented teacher–student interactions, children's participation, instructional strategies, and observable manifestations of moral behavior using structured observation sheets and detailed field notes. The third stage consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with the school principal and classroom teacher to obtain in-depth information concerning instructional planning, classroom implementation, evaluation procedures, perceived effectiveness, and challenges encountered during the implementation of Islamic singing activities. Finally, documentary evidence was collected to complement observational and interview data, including lesson plans, school documents, photographs, and children's developmental records. Throughout the fieldwork, reflective field notes were maintained to document contextual information, emerging patterns, and preliminary analytical interpretations.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological sequence, the entire research procedure adopted in this study is presented in Figure 1. The workflow illustrates the chronological stages of the research, beginning with problem identification and literature review, followed by research design, participant selection, instrument development, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness procedures, interpretation of findings, and reporting of results. Presenting the research procedure visually enhances methodological transparency and enables readers to understand how each stage was systematically interconnected throughout the investigation.



Figure 1. Research Workflow of the Qualitative Descriptive Case Study

As illustrated in Figure 1, the research was conducted through fourteen interconnected stages designed to ensure methodological rigor and the credibility of the findings. The process commenced with identifying the research problem and reviewing relevant literature to establish the research gap, followed by selecting an appropriate qualitative descriptive case study design. Subsequent stages involved obtaining ethical approval, selecting participants through purposive sampling, and developing research instruments validated through expert judgment. Data were then collected using participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis before being systematically organized through transcription, field-note preparation, and document management. The collected information was analyzed through coding, categorization, and theme development following the interactive analytical framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail were implemented prior to interpreting the findings, drawing conclusions, reporting the results, and disseminating the research outcomes. This systematic research workflow ensured that every methodological stage was conducted transparently, consistently, and in accordance with internationally recognized standards for qualitative educational research.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Im et al. (2023; Thompson Burdine et al. (2021), which emphasizes continuous interaction between data collection and analysis throughout the research process. Analysis began with data condensation, during which interview transcripts, observation records, field notes, and documentary evidence were organized, reduced, and coded to identify meaningful units relevant to the research objectives.

The coding process was conducted in three iterative stages consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was used to identify preliminary concepts emerging from the data, axial coding established relationships among categories, and selective coding integrated these categories into broader themes describing the implementation of Islamic singing activities and the process of moral value internalization. The categorized data were subsequently displayed through narrative descriptions, matrices, tables, and conceptual illustrations to facilitate systematic comparison across multiple data sources. Finally, conclusions were generated through iterative interpretation, pattern identification, and continuous verification using triangulated evidence derived from observations, interviews, and documentary analysis. Throughout the analytical process, emerging interpretations were repeatedly compared with the original data to ensure conceptual consistency, analytical rigor, and the overall credibility of the findings. This analytical procedure enabled the researchers to construct a comprehensive explanation of how Islamic singing activities were implemented and how these pedagogical practices contributed to the gradual internalization of moral values among young children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings revealed that Islamic singing activities have become an integral part of the learning culture at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten. These activities are conducted regularly during the opening, core, and closing stages of classroom instruction, with each session lasting approximately 15–20 minutes. Teachers not only encourage children to sing Islamic songs but also explain the meaning of the lyrics, model appropriate behaviors, and relate the moral messages to children's everyday experiences. This integration of songs with authentic daily practices enables children not only to memorize the lyrics but also to understand and apply the moral values conveyed through the songs. These findings support Legg (2023) who argued that children acquire behavior through observing, imitating, and repeatedly practicing the behaviors modeled by their surrounding environment.

Table 1. Children's participation in Islamic singing activities at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten

Participation Category	Number of Children	Percentage
Highly Active	8	57.14%
Active	4	28.57%
Moderately Active	2	14.29%
Less Active	0	0.00%

As presented in Table 1, children's participation increased considerably throughout the learning process. During the first week of the study, several children were still passive and were unable to perform the song lyrics and accompanying movements completely. However, after the teacher repeatedly introduced the same songs accompanied by body movements, 12 of the 14 children (85.71%) enthusiastically participated in the singing activities, while the remaining two children also demonstrated noticeable improvement despite still requiring teacher guidance. These findings are consistent with those of Mohammadhosseini & Schmid (2025), who reported that music and singing enhance children's emotional engagement, thereby making the learning process more meaningful.



Figure 2. Children performing Islamic songs accompanied by body movements while standing.



Figure 3. Children participating in Islamic singing activities while sitting in a circle on the classroom floor.

Improvements in children's moral behavior also became evident following the implementation of Islamic singing activities during the study. Classroom observations indicated that children gradually developed the habit of greeting others with Islamic salutations upon entering the classroom, reciting prayers before and after learning activities, expressing gratitude after receiving help, and apologizing when they made mistakes. According to the classroom teacher, these behavioral changes did not occur immediately but developed gradually through continuous daily habituation. Islamic songs served as consistent reminders that indirectly encouraged children to repeat positive behaviors across different situations (Nugraha et al., 2025). These findings support the argument of (Nisa et al., 2024), who suggested that moral development during the golden age is more effectively achieved through repeated habituation than through verbal instruction alone.

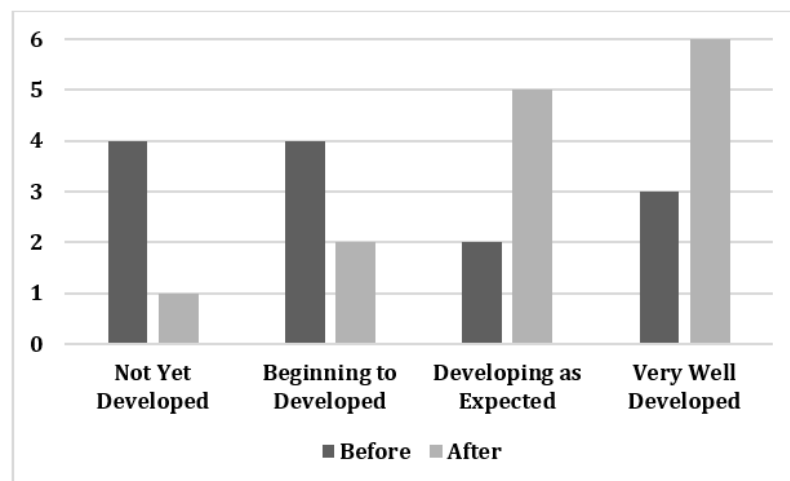


Figure 4. Comparison of children's moral value development before and after Islamic singing activities at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten

The chart illustrates that the number of children classified as Not Yet Developed (NYD) decreased from four to one, while the number of children in the Very Well Developed (VWD) category increased from three to six. These changes indicate that Islamic singing activities contributed positively to the development of children's moral behavior, although continuous habituation remains necessary to sustain these improvements. The findings suggest that instructional practices integrating music, movement, language, and emotional experiences facilitate the internalization of moral values more effectively than conventional teacher-centered approaches based solely on verbal instruction. Interviews with the classroom teacher revealed that the effectiveness of Islamic singing activities was influenced not only by the quality of the songs but also by the teacher's ability to connect the song lyrics with children's everyday experiences. Following each singing session, the teacher conducted a brief discussion by asking questions such as, "Who greeted others when arriving at school today?", "Why should we always be honest?", and "What should we do if a friend falls down?" These reflective questions helped children establish meaningful connections between the moral messages contained in the songs and their daily behavior, ensuring that the learning process extended beyond singing itself.

The interviews further indicated that regular communication with parents was maintained through communication notebooks and class messaging groups to encourage children to sing the Islamic songs they learned at school again at home. This collaboration reinforced the habituation process, making it easier for moral values to become embedded in children's daily behavior. These findings support previous studies, which emphasized that effective moral education in early childhood requires strong collaboration between schools and families, as children spend most of their time in the home environment. The successful implementation of Islamic singing activities in this study demonstrates that moral education for young children cannot be separated from their developmental characteristics. Young children naturally learn most effectively through enjoyable activities involving physical movement, repetition, and direct experiences (Bjorklund, 2022). Consequently, Islamic songs enhanced children's understanding of moral values more effectively than verbal instruction alone. These findings are consistent with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which proposes that children's moral reasoning develops progressively through concrete experiences and social interactions rather than through conceptual knowledge alone.

Compared with previous studies, the present research offers several findings that extend the existing literature on moral education in early childhood. Glew et al. (2021) primarily examined the effectiveness of singing as a learning medium for enhancing children's religious development, while Sagala (2024) highlighted the role of habituation through songs in character building. The present study complements these findings by demonstrating that the success of Islamic singing activities depends not only on the frequency of implementation but also on the integration of meaningful song lyrics, appropriate instructional strategies, consistent behavioral habituation, and support from both the school and family environments. Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges in implementing Islamic singing activities. Interview findings indicated that children differed in their levels of concentration and readiness to learn. Another important challenge was the lack of consistency in reinforcing positive habits within the family environment, which limited the optimal internalization of moral values. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of Islamic singing activities is influenced by multiple factors, including children's individual characteristics, teachers' pedagogical competence, the availability of appropriate instructional resources, and family support as the child's primary educational environment.

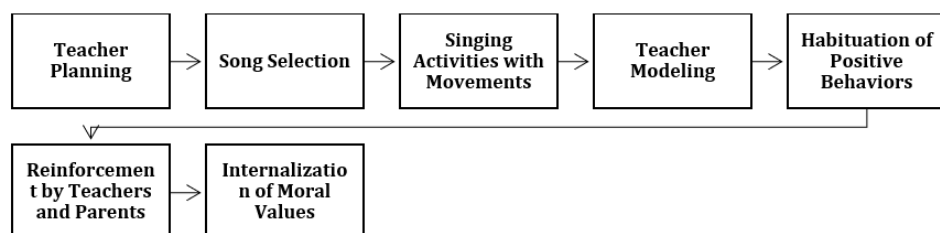


Figure 5. Stages of moral value internalization through Islamic singing activities at Al Istiqomah Kindergarten

Based on the figure above, the process of instilling moral values through Islamic singing activities can be understood as a series of interconnected stages. Teachers begin by selecting songs that align with the learning objectives, followed by explaining the meaning of the lyrics, encouraging children to sing the songs repeatedly, modeling appropriate behaviors, guiding children through practical applications, and reinforcing these behaviors through daily habituation. This sequence creates a holistic learning experience in which children not only understand moral values but also gradually develop the habit of applying them in their everyday lives. The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they reinforce the view that character development in early childhood is fostered through active, enjoyable, and repetitive learning experiences. Practically, the findings suggest that Islamic singing activities should be considered one of the primary instructional strategies for religious and moral education in Islamic-based early childhood education institutions. Rather than serving merely as an opening classroom activity, singing should be intentionally designed as an integral component of a comprehensive habituation strategy that is embedded throughout the entire learning process. This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted in only one educational institution; therefore, the findings are closely influenced by the school's culture and the teacher's pedagogical practices. Second, the relatively small number of participants limits the generalizability of the findings to other early childhood education settings. Third, the observation period was relatively short, meaning that the observed changes in children's moral behavior primarily reflect short-term development. Therefore, future studies involving a broader range of research sites or a longer observation period are recommended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic singing activities in promoting moral development among young children.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Islamic singing activities function not merely as complementary classroom entertainment but as a structured pedagogical strategy for facilitating moral value internalization among young children. Rather than focusing solely on the memorization of religious songs, the implementation observed in this study integrated instructional planning, teacher facilitation, behavioral modeling, and continuous habituation into a coherent learning process that transformed abstract moral concepts into observable daily behaviors. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of Islamic singing lies in the pedagogical process surrounding the activity rather than in the musical performance itself. Such an interpretation reinforces the perspective that moral education during early childhood should emphasize meaningful experiences that enable children to construct behavioral understanding through repeated social interaction instead of relying exclusively on verbal explanation. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings strongly support Social Learning Theory, which posits that children acquire new behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within authentic social environments (Legg, 2023). Simultaneously, the findings are consistent with the developmental perspective proposed by Turiel (2024), who argues that moral development evolves through children's active participation in everyday social experiences rather than through the transmission of abstract ethical principles alone. Consequently, this study extends previous scholarship by illustrating that Islamic singing activities become pedagogically effective only when embedded within an intentional instructional framework that integrates cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral practice into a unified learning experience.

The present findings also complement and expand previous empirical studies investigating music-based learning in early childhood education. Earlier studies primarily concluded that Islamic songs increase children's enthusiasm and participation during classroom activities because musical learning corresponds with children's developmental characteristics (Loka & Ichsan, 2022; Suharsiwi et al., 2024). Likewise, Glew et al. (2021) emphasized that group singing promotes psychosocial well-being and strengthens children's emotional engagement throughout learning activities. While these studies established the educational value of singing as an instructional medium, they provided relatively limited explanation regarding the pedagogical mechanisms through which moral values become internalized during classroom interaction. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that instructional effectiveness depends upon the integration of meaningful lyrics,

teacher explanation, behavioral demonstration, reflective dialogue, and repeated reinforcement rather than on singing activities in isolation. This distinction is theoretically significant because it shifts the focus of discussion from learning outcomes toward instructional processes that generate those outcomes. Consequently, the present findings position Islamic singing as an experiential pedagogical approach that actively facilitates value internalization through continuous interaction among teachers, learners, and the classroom environment, thereby contributing a more comprehensive conceptual explanation to the growing international literature on value-based early childhood education.

Another important finding concerns the substantial increase in children's active participation following repeated implementation of Islamic singing accompanied by body movements and teacher guidance. The progressive improvement in participation indicates that meaningful engagement develops gradually through repeated exposure to enjoyable and developmentally appropriate learning experiences rather than emerging immediately after a single instructional session. This finding supports educational theories emphasizing that emotional engagement represents an essential prerequisite for meaningful learning because positive emotions increase children's attention, motivation, and willingness to participate in educational activities (Gamage et al., 2021). Furthermore, the incorporation of body movement, rhythm, and repetition reflects principles of embodied learning, whereby cognitive understanding is strengthened through physical experience and active participation. This interpretation is consistent with Mohammadhosseini and Schmid (2025), who reported that singing-based multimodal learning environments promote deeper emotional involvement and facilitate more meaningful learning experiences among children. Similarly, Ramona and Cholimah (2025) argued that instructional media integrating movement, repetition, and enjoyable interaction are considerably more effective in cultivating moral values than conventional teacher-centered instruction because they correspond more closely with young children's developmental characteristics. However, the present study advances these earlier findings by demonstrating that sustained participation was influenced not only by the attractiveness of musical activities but also by teachers' pedagogical competence in connecting song lyrics with children's real-life experiences through reflective questioning and continuous reinforcement. This evidence therefore suggests that children's engagement should be understood as the product of deliberate instructional design rather than merely as a natural consequence of using songs in classroom learning, thereby providing an important conceptual contribution to current discussions concerning effective pedagogical strategies for moral education in Islamic early childhood settings.

The findings further reveal that the implementation of Islamic singing activities contributed to observable improvements in children's moral behaviors, including greeting others politely, praying before and after learning activities, expressing gratitude, apologizing for mistakes, respecting teachers, and demonstrating greater classroom discipline. Importantly, these behavioral changes emerged gradually through continuous practice rather than through immediate behavioral transformation, indicating that moral development is fundamentally a cumulative learning process. This pattern reinforces the view that repeated exposure to meaningful moral experiences enables children to internalize desirable values until they become habitual forms of conduct. From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which argues that young children's moral reasoning evolves through concrete social interactions and repeated experiences rather than through abstract ethical instruction alone. Likewise, Zembylas (2021) emphasizes that habits are formed through continuous affective engagement, where emotions, repeated actions, and environmental reinforcement collectively shape children's dispositions toward appropriate behavior. The present findings therefore suggest that Islamic singing activities function as a practical mechanism through which repeated emotional experiences gradually transform externally introduced moral messages into internally regulated behavioral habits. This interpretation extends previous research by demonstrating that musical learning does not merely improve children's understanding of moral concepts but also supports the behavioral consolidation required for sustainable character development.

These findings are broadly consistent with previous studies reporting positive relationships between music-based learning and children's religious and moral development. Saputri et al. (2026) concluded that repeated Islamic singing encourages the development of religious habits such as

praying, greeting others respectfully, and demonstrating obedience in everyday activities. Similarly, Aziz et al. (2025) argued that religious learning media become more effective when they integrate emotional engagement with practical behavioral experiences rather than relying solely on cognitive instruction. Research conducted by Anisah (2023) also emphasized that sustainable character education depends upon the establishment of supportive school cultures in which moral behaviors are consistently modeled and reinforced. Nevertheless, the present study extends these earlier findings by illustrating the sequential instructional mechanisms underlying successful moral internalization. Rather than portraying singing simply as a motivational activity, this study demonstrates that behavioral transformation results from the interaction among meaningful song selection, teacher explanation, behavioral modeling, reflective discussion, and repeated habituation across multiple learning contexts. This integrated pedagogical sequence provides a more comprehensive explanation for why some music-based character education programs produce lasting behavioral change while others generate only temporary enthusiasm. Consequently, the present findings contribute to the international literature by shifting attention from measuring behavioral outcomes toward understanding the educational processes responsible for producing those outcomes, thereby addressing one of the principal gaps identified in previous research.

Another significant finding concerns the critical role of teacher mediation in facilitating children's interpretation of the moral meanings embedded within Islamic songs. The classroom observations and interview data indicate that teachers consistently linked song lyrics with children's everyday experiences through reflective questioning, practical examples, and direct behavioral modeling. This instructional strategy transformed singing from a routine classroom activity into an interactive learning process that encouraged children to reflect upon the practical implications of moral values within authentic social situations. Such findings reinforce constructivist perspectives, which argue that children actively construct understanding through guided interaction with knowledgeable adults rather than passively receiving information (Gamage et al., 2021). Furthermore, these findings support contemporary perspectives on moral education emphasizing that teachers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators who create meaningful learning environments in which values are interpreted, negotiated, and practiced through authentic social experiences (Watanabe, 2025). Similar observations have been reported by Kurniati and Darajaatul (2024), who found that value-based learning becomes substantially more effective when educators intentionally contextualize moral messages through stories, discussions, and behavioral demonstrations. However, the present study broadens this understanding by showing that reflective questioning following singing activities serves as a crucial cognitive bridge between symbolic moral messages and children's everyday behavioral choices. This contribution advances existing theoretical discussions by demonstrating that teacher mediation represents an indispensable component of value internalization, thereby indicating that the educational effectiveness of Islamic singing depends as much upon pedagogical interaction as upon the musical activity itself.

An equally important finding emerging from this study is the indispensable role of collaboration between schools and families in reinforcing children's moral development. The interview data indicate that teachers maintained regular communication with parents through communication notebooks and class messaging groups, encouraging children to practice Islamic songs and associated moral behaviors beyond the classroom. This continuity of reinforcement demonstrates that moral education cannot be viewed as an isolated school-based responsibility but rather as a shared educational commitment involving multiple learning environments. Such findings support ecological perspectives on child development, which emphasize that children's behavioral formation is shaped through consistent interactions across interconnected social contexts. Likewise, Hariani et al. (2022) argued that family involvement serves as a fundamental mechanism through which ethical values introduced at school are reinforced and transformed into stable behavioral habits within everyday life. Similar conclusions were reported by Mahoney et al. (2021), who emphasized that sustainable social and emotional learning requires coherent support across schools, families, and communities rather than fragmented educational interventions. However, the present study advances this perspective by illustrating that family participation is not merely complementary but constitutes an integral component of the pedagogical framework through which Islamic singing activities facilitate moral value internalization. This finding therefore contributes conceptually by

proposing that successful value-based education depends upon the continuity of moral reinforcement across institutional and familial settings, thereby extending previous discussions concerning collaborative approaches to early childhood character education.

Despite the positive educational outcomes identified in this study, the findings also reveal several contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of Islamic singing activities. Differences in children's attention span, learning readiness, and responsiveness to classroom instruction indicate that moral internalization does not occur uniformly across individuals. Furthermore, teachers reported that inconsistent reinforcement within some family environments occasionally reduced the sustainability of positive behavioral changes, suggesting that classroom intervention alone cannot guarantee long-term character formation. These observations highlight the complexity of moral education by demonstrating that children's behavioral development is shaped through the interaction of individual characteristics, pedagogical quality, and environmental support. Such interpretations are consistent with Mushawir et al. (2025), who argued that educators' instructional competence and school culture substantially influence the success of character education initiatives. Likewise, Irfani et al. (2025) emphasized that moral education within Islamic institutions frequently encounters contextual challenges arising from differences in children's backgrounds, learning experiences, and family engagement. Rather than weakening the conclusions of the present study, these contextual variations strengthen its theoretical significance by demonstrating that Islamic singing activities should not be regarded as universally effective instructional techniques but as pedagogical strategies whose success depends upon the quality of implementation and the consistency of social reinforcement. Consequently, this study encourages future researchers to adopt more context-sensitive approaches when examining moral education, recognizing that instructional effectiveness emerges from the dynamic interaction between educational practice and children's broader developmental environments rather than from any single teaching method alone.

Collectively, the findings position this study as a meaningful contribution to the international literature on early childhood moral education by shifting scholarly attention from educational outcomes toward the pedagogical mechanisms underlying value internalization. Previous investigations have predominantly evaluated the effectiveness of Islamic songs in improving children's participation, religious understanding, or observable moral behavior (Loka & Ichsan, 2022; Suharsiwi et al., 2024; Saputri et al., 2026), whereas relatively limited attention has been devoted to explaining how instructional planning, teacher mediation, behavioral habituation, and family collaboration interact as an integrated educational system. By documenting these interconnected processes, the present study responds directly to the research gap identified in the introduction and proposes a more comprehensive implementation framework for Islamic moral education. Theoretically, the study extends Social Learning Theory by demonstrating that observational learning becomes substantially more effective when reinforced through emotionally engaging musical experiences, reflective dialogue, repeated habituation, and cross-contextual reinforcement. Simultaneously, the findings broaden contemporary perspectives on value-based education by emphasizing that moral development is best understood as a gradual process of behavioral internalization supported by continuous interaction among cognitive, affective, social, and religious dimensions of learning. From a practical perspective, the proposed implementation framework provides evidence-based guidance for teachers, school leaders, and curriculum developers seeking to design character education programs that are developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and pedagogically sustainable within Islamic early childhood education settings. Ultimately, by integrating instructional planning, meaningful learning experiences, behavioral modeling, reflective practice, and collaborative family engagement into a unified pedagogical process, this study offers a novel conceptual perspective that strengthens the global discourse on moral education and provides a foundation for future comparative and longitudinal research examining sustainable character formation among young children.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic singing activities constitutes a meaningful pedagogical approach for fostering moral values among young children within an Islamic early childhood education setting. The findings indicate that the

effectiveness of these activities is not determined solely by the use of religious songs but by the systematic integration of instructional planning, meaningful lyric interpretation, teacher modeling, repeated behavioral habituation, continuous reinforcement, and collaboration between the school and families. Through these interconnected processes, children gradually developed positive moral behaviors, including greeting others politely, praying before and after learning activities, respecting teachers, maintaining classroom discipline, and demonstrating greater responsibility in everyday interactions. Beyond confirming the educational value of Islamic singing activities, this study extends existing scholarship by emphasizing the pedagogical mechanisms through which moral values are internalized rather than focusing exclusively on learning outcomes. The proposed implementation framework contributes to the literature on early childhood moral education by illustrating how enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, and value-based learning experiences can facilitate sustainable character formation through consistent instructional practice and environmental reinforcement. From a practical perspective, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for teachers, school leaders, and curriculum developers seeking to strengthen character education through culturally and religiously relevant learning activities. Nevertheless, because this study was conducted in a single Islamic kindergarten with a relatively small number of participants, caution should be exercised when transferring the findings to different educational contexts. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve multiple institutions, broader participant groups, and longitudinal designs to examine the long-term influence of Islamic singing activities on children's moral development and to further validate the implementation framework proposed in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Melly Audiah conceived the research idea, designed the study, developed the research instruments, conducted the fieldwork, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, prepared the visual materials, and drafted the original manuscript. Muhludin supervised the research process, provided methodological and theoretical guidance, contributed to data interpretation, critically reviewed the manuscript, and revised its intellectual content. Husin contributed to the conceptual development of the study, validated the research procedures and findings, provided academic supervision throughout the research process, and critically reviewed and refined the manuscript prior to submission. All authors discussed the results, approved the final version of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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