

Religious Values-Based Role Playing for Character Development in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, Enrekang Regency

¹Hasrianti Mandalika Hasan, ²Andi Fitriani Djollong, ³Muhammad Naim, ⁴Suredah Hamid, ⁵Nasri Hamang

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, Indonesia

¹hasriantihasan29@admin.paud.belajar.id, ²andifitriandjollong@umpar.ac.id,
³muhammadnaim@umpar.ac.id, ⁴suredahhamid@umpar.ac.id,
⁵nasrihamang@umpar.ac.id.

ABSTRACT : Character development in early childhood plays a crucial role in fostering moral, social, emotional, and spiritual competencies that influence children's future behavior and personality. This study aimed to examine the characteristics of early childhood learners, explore the implementation of a religious values-based role-playing method, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its application in character development at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang, Enrekang Regency, Indonesia. This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study design. Data were collected over a three-month period through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving five key informants consisting of one principal and four classroom teachers. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability procedures. The findings revealed that children demonstrated positive character development in creativity, empathy, cooperation, independence, self-confidence, adaptability, honesty, responsibility, tolerance, gratitude, and spiritual awareness. Religious values-based role playing enabled children to actively engage in meaningful learning experiences that integrated Islamic values into daily social interactions. Supporting factors included teacher commitment, parental involvement, collaborative school culture, children's readiness, and appropriate learning materials, while inhibiting factors consisted of limited facilities, time constraints, varying levels of understanding among children, and environmental influences. The study concludes that religious values-based role playing is an effective strategy for promoting holistic character development in early childhood education. Practically, the findings provide guidance for teachers and educational institutions in designing character education programs that integrate religious values through experiential learning activities.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Character Development, Role Playing, Religious Values, Character Education.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation for the formation of children's personality and character in later stages of development. During the age range of 0–6 years, children experience the golden age, a period in which brain development reaches approximately 80% of its adult capacity. Therefore, educational stimulation provided during this phase plays a crucial role in determining the quality of children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development in the future (Hurlock, 2013; Suyanto, 2015). Character education introduced during early childhood functions as a long-term investment in shaping moral values, attitudes, and positive social behaviors. Children who receive character education from an early age tend to develop better self-control, empathy, and social responsibility as they progress to higher levels of education.

From the perspective of Islamic education, children's character formation should be grounded in religious values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The cultivation of faith (tauhid) and noble character (akhlak) constitutes the core of character development from an early age, as emphasized in QS. Ali Imran/3:79 and QS. Luqman/31:13–16, which highlight the importance of role modeling, advice, and the habituation of divine values in children's education (Ibnu Katsir, 2004; Nata, 2016). These religious values not only shape children's spiritual dimensions but also serve as guidelines for behavior in social life. With a strong foundation of faith, children are expected to distinguish between right and wrong and develop moral awareness naturally from an early age.

Islamic scholars and educational thinkers have emphasized that children's character education should begin in early childhood through approaches that are appropriate to their developmental stages. Shihab (2002), in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, explains that instilling sound faith from an early age will foster noble character that serves as the basis of future behavior. Similarly, Hamka (2015), in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, argues that protecting children from worldly and spiritual harm is achieved through continuous religious and moral education. Effective character education is not implemented through coercion but through dialogue, role modeling, and consistent habituation. This approach aligns with the principles of early childhood education, which regard children as active learners who develop gradually through meaningful experiences.

From a legal perspective, early childhood education receives significant attention from the Indonesian government. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National

Education System states that ECE is an educational effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age through educational stimulation designed to support their physical and psychological growth and development. Furthermore, Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education emphasizes the importance of internalizing religious values, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation through collaboration among schools, families, and communities (Kemendikbud, 2017; Tilaar, 2012). These regulations demonstrate that character education is an integral component of the national education system and must be implemented systematically and sustainably.

Nevertheless, numerous studies indicate that character education practices in early childhood institutions remain predominantly conventional and teacher-centered. Religious learning activities are often limited to memorizing prayers, singing songs, and listening to stories without providing meaningful hands-on experiences that allow children to internalize character values in everyday life (Mulyasa, 2018; Zubaedi, 2017). As a result, the goals of character education have not been achieved optimally. Children may understand values cognitively but often struggle to apply them in social interactions. Therefore, innovative instructional methods that promote direct experience and active participation are needed.

The phenomenon of moral decline among young children has become increasingly evident through behaviors such as a lack of discipline, limited empathy, and aggressive tendencies in interactions with peers. The rapid development of digital technology and social media has further intensified the challenges of character formation, as children are increasingly exposed to content that may not align with educational and religious values (Bandura, 1986; Koesoema, 2015). Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that children learn through observation and imitation; therefore, poorly supervised digital environments can significantly influence behavioral development. This situation requires educators to employ contextual learning methods that are relevant to children's experiences and developmental needs in order to instill character values effectively.

Role playing is one of the instructional approaches considered highly effective for young children because it allows them to learn through direct experience, imitation, and social interaction. Hamalik (2013) argues that role-playing activities can simultaneously develop children's cognitive, affective, and social competencies. Likewise, Samani and Hariyanto (2019) emphasize that role playing provides opportunities for children to understand social roles, express emotions, and

internalize moral values naturally. When role-playing activities are integrated with religious values, character education becomes more meaningful because it addresses not only social dimensions but also the spiritual foundations of Islamic character development in early childhood.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten in Dulang, Enrekang Regency, character education based on religious values has not fully optimized the use of role-playing methods. Teachers continue to face challenges in designing systematic role-playing activities that effectively integrate religious values, resulting in less-than-optimal development of children's discipline, independence, and politeness (Arikunto, 2019; Sugiyono, 2022). The gap between the ideal condition (*das sollen*) and the actual condition (*das sein*) highlights the need for innovative approaches to character education. Therefore, research on the implementation of role-playing methods based on religious values is important as a potential solution to these challenges and as an effort to strengthen character development among early childhood learners.

METHODS

Research Location and Type

1. Research Location

This study was conducted at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten (TK ABA) Dulang, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The selection of this research site was based on both academic and practical considerations, including the accessibility of the location for conducting in-depth observations and its relevance to the focus of the study. The educational environment in Enrekang Regency, particularly in Anggeraja District, plays a significant role in the development of early childhood education. Furthermore, this setting provided opportunities to obtain comprehensive and factual data regarding the implementation of religious-values-based role-playing methods in fostering character development among young children (Sugiyono, 2022; Arikunto, 2019).

2. Research Type

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research generates data in the form of words, behaviors, and documents observed in natural settings rather than numerical data (Moleong, 2019). According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative research aims to describe social phenomena in depth from the perspectives of the participants involved (as cited in Moleong, 2019). A descriptive

approach was utilized to systematically and accurately portray the implementation of role-playing methods based on religious values and to identify the challenges encountered during their application (Margono, 2014).

Research Approach

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach because it sought to understand educational phenomena holistically and contextually. The approach emphasizes the interpretation of learning processes as they naturally occur within the school environment (Sukardi, 2016). In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, directly observing, interviewing, and documenting learning activities (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach was considered appropriate for providing a detailed description of the effectiveness of religious-values-based role-playing methods in enhancing character development among early childhood learners at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang.

Time and Setting of the Study

The research was conducted over a period of three months, from October 2025 to January 2026. This duration was considered sufficient to carry out repeated observations, in-depth interviews, and continuous documentation of learning activities. The study took place at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang, Enrekang Regency, an early childhood educational institution that implements learning activities grounded in religious values (Arikunto, 2019).

Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources (Arikunto, 2019).

1. Primary Data

Primary data were obtained directly from key informants through observation and in-depth interviews. The informants included the school principal and teachers of TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang who were actively involved in the learning process. Primary data consisted of participants' statements, actions, and behaviors related to the implementation of role-playing methods based on religious values (Moleong, 2019).

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from school documents, instructional archives, photographs of learning activities, and scholarly literature such as books, journal articles, and educational regulations. These data served to complement and support the primary data, thereby strengthening the overall analysis (Sugiyono, 2022)

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, whereby participants were chosen based on their knowledge and involvement in the phenomenon under investigation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary research instrument. The researcher acts as an observer, interviewer, and data analyst who is responsive to field dynamics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Supporting instruments included interview guidelines and observation sheets. As the main instrument, the researcher possesses the flexibility and sensitivity necessary to explore meanings and insights that cannot be captured through non-human instruments (Nasution, 2016).

Data Collection Techniques

1. Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted by directly engaging in classroom activities to obtain an authentic understanding of how the role-playing method was implemented in practice (Arikunto, 2019).

2. In-Depth Interviews

Unstructured interviews were carried out to explore the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of the informants in depth. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain rich and authentic data regarding the implementation of the learning method (Sugiyono, 2022).

3. Documentation

Documentation was employed to collect supporting evidence in the form of school records, activity photographs, lesson plans, and other relevant documents. These materials were used to complement the findings obtained through observation and interviews (Miles et al., 2014).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying raw data obtained from the field. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the findings.

Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Several strategies were employed, including prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of sources, methods, and time, as well as an audit trail of the research process. These procedures were implemented to enhance the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the study findings (Sugiyono, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

A. Character Development of Early Childhood Learners at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang, Enrekang Regency

The character development of early childhood learners at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang, Enrekang Regency, demonstrates diverse and positive growth in accordance with children's developmental stages. Findings from observations and interviews with teachers conducted in November 2025 revealed that each classroom group exhibited distinct dominant characteristics, reflecting the gradual learning processes and habituation practices implemented by the school. Children's character development was evident in areas such as creativity, empathy, independence, adaptability, and emotional resilience, all of which are important indicators of successful character education in early childhood.

Based on interview results, Class A teachers reported that children displayed high levels of creativity and curiosity, while children in Class A1 demonstrated stronger empathy and cooperative skills. Children in Class B began to exhibit greater independence and self-confidence, whereas those in Class B1 showed stronger adaptability and emotional resilience. These findings support the view that children's character develops progressively through continuous learning experiences and social interactions (Mulyasa, 2018; Zubaedi, 2017).

Table 1. Characteristics of Early Childhood Learners by Class

Class	Dominant Characteristics	Data Source
A	Creative, highly curious	Interview with Class A Teacher
A1	Empathetic, cooperative	Interview with Class A1 Teacher
B	Independent, self-confident	Interview with Class B Teacher
B1	Adaptable, emotionally resilient	Interview with Class B1 Teacher

1. Character Values Cultivated

The character values cultivated at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang include creativity, empathy, cooperation, independence, courage, mutual respect, responsibility, as well as spiritual and religious values. Islamic Religious Education teachers play an important role in integrating religious principles such as honesty, gratitude, and kindness into daily learning activities. These values are instilled through habituation, role modeling, and engaging learning experiences, enabling children not only to understand character values but also to practice them in their daily lives.

Table 2. Character Values Taught

Character Value	Form of Implementation	Teacher
Creativity	Arts and exploration activities	Class A Teacher
Empathy and Cooperation	Sharing activities and group work	Class A1 Teacher
Independence and Courage	Simple decision-making activities	Class B Teacher
Responsibility and Respect	Classroom discipline and etiquette	Class B1 Teacher
Spiritual and Moral Values	Prayer, honesty, and gratitude practices	Islamic Religious Education Teacher

2. Indicators of Character Development

Children's character development is reflected in increased curiosity, empathy, independence, respect for others, and the practice of spiritual values. Children who actively ask questions, assist their peers, complete tasks independently, and demonstrate simple religious behaviors represent indicators of successful character education. These findings reinforce the argument that early childhood character development is shaped through social interaction and consistent habituation (Bandura, 1986; Koesoema, 2015).

Table 3. Indicators of Character Development

Indicator	Behavioral Description
Curiosity	Actively asks questions and explores new experiences
Empathy	Helps others and understands peers' feelings
Independence	Completes tasks independently

Respectfulness	Shows respect toward teachers and peers
Spirituality	Prays regularly and demonstrates honesty

3. Challenges in Character Formation

The process of character formation faces several challenges, including inconsistent habituation practices, the influence of external environments and media, low self-confidence among some children, diverse student personalities, and limited time allocated for religious education. These challenges require flexible, collaborative, and contextual learning approaches to ensure that character education objectives can be achieved effectively.

Table 4. Challenges in Character Formation

Challenge	Source
Consistency of habituation practices	Class A Teacher
Influence of external environments	Class A1 Teacher
Low self-confidence	Class B Teacher
Diversity of children's personalities	Class B1 Teacher
Limited instructional time for Islamic education	Islamic Religious Education Teacher

4. Changes in Children's Character After Learning Activities

Interview findings indicated significant improvements in children's character following participation in learning activities. Children became more self-confident, empathetic, independent, responsible, tolerant, and demonstrated improved religious behavior. These changes suggest that the educational practices implemented at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang have been effective in fostering holistic character development, encompassing social, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Table 5. Changes in Children's Character After Learning Activities

Aspect	Observed Changes
Social	More communicative and cooperative
Emotional	Increased empathy and tolerance
Independence	Greater responsibility in completing tasks
Moral and Spiritual	More honest, prayerful, and grateful

B. Implementation of Religious Values-Based Role-Playing Methods in Early Childhood Character Development

1. Rationale for the Implementation of the Role-Playing Method

The implementation of the role-playing method in early childhood education at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang, Enrekang Regency, is grounded in the developmental characteristics of young children, who learn most effectively through play, imitation, and direct experience. This method is considered effective because it allows children to experience social situations that embody moral and religious values in a concrete and meaningful manner. Based on interview findings, teachers stated that role playing helps children develop empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and other social skills that serve as fundamental components of character formation from an early age.

Table 6. Rationale for the Use of the Role-Playing Method

Informant	Position	Reason for Implementing Role Playing
Mrs. Indrawati	Class A Teacher	Developing children's empathy and social skills
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah	Class A1 Teacher	Helping children understand social roles and responsibilities
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri	Class B Teacher	Instilling cooperation and honesty
Mrs. Kasmawati	Class B1 Teacher	Developing tolerance and acceptance of differences
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi	Islamic Religious Education Teacher	Building children's moral and spiritual character

Based on Table 6, the implementation of the role-playing method at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang is founded on both pedagogical considerations and the psychological development of young children. Teachers view this method as capable of creating meaningful learning experiences because it actively involves children in social situations that resemble real-life contexts. Through role-playing activities, children do not merely receive knowledge passively but actively experience, feel, and practice the values being taught.

Interview findings revealed that role playing is utilized to develop various aspects of children's character, including empathy, social skills, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, and tolerance toward diversity. Teachers believe that this method helps children understand their social roles within their environment while fostering mutual respect and cooperation. Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education teacher

emphasized that role playing plays a crucial role in developing children's moral and spiritual character through the internalization of religious values.

Therefore, role playing functions not only as an enjoyable instructional strategy but also as a holistic educational approach that integrates children's social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development in a balanced manner. Consequently, it is highly relevant and effective for character formation based on religious values in early childhood education.

2. Implementation of Religious Values-Based Role Playing in Learning Activities

The implementation of role-playing activities based on religious values is carried out through play scenarios that reflect children's everyday experiences. Religious values are integrated into role-playing activities such as sharing, helping friends, speaking honestly, maintaining cleanliness, and showing respect toward others. Teachers act as facilitators who guide the flow of activities to ensure that children understand and practice these values in real-life situations.

Table 7. Forms of Religious Values-Based Role-Playing Activities

Informant	Class	Role-Playing Activities
Mrs. Indrawati	A	Helping friends and sharing
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah	A1	Practicing honesty and polite behavior
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri	B	Maintaining cleanliness and helping others
Mrs. Kasmawati	B1	Respecting differences
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi	Islamic Religious Education	Honesty, sharing, and good manners

Based on Table 7, the implementation of religious values-based role playing at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang is conducted through various activities tailored to the characteristics of each class and the developmental stages of the children. Each teacher designs role-playing activities that are relevant to children's daily lives, enabling religious values to be understood concretely and applied practically.

For example, in Classes A and A1, role-playing activities focus on developing habits of sharing, honesty, and politeness as foundational elements of moral character. Meanwhile, in Classes B and B1, role-playing activities emphasize helping others, maintaining cleanliness, and respecting individual differences. This

demonstrates a continuous and developmentally appropriate implementation of religious values according to children's social and emotional growth. In Islamic Religious Education lessons, role-playing activities are specifically designed to cultivate honesty, sharing, and good manners as essential components of children's religious character.

These findings indicate that religious values are not taught solely through verbal instruction but through direct experiences that involve children's emotions, social interactions, and real actions. Consequently, role playing serves as an effective instructional medium that enables children to internalize religious values naturally, meaningfully, and enjoyably in their daily lives.

3. Religious Values Instilled Through Role Playing

The religious values cultivated through the role-playing method encompass both fundamental moral values and spiritual values. These values are selected because they are relevant to young children's daily experiences and serve as the foundation for developing Islamic character.

Table 8. Religious Values Integrated into Role-Playing Activities

Informant	Religious Values Instilled
Mrs. Indrawati	Sharing, empathy
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah	Honesty, politeness
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri	Responsibility, gratitude
Mrs. Kasmawati	Tolerance, mutual respect
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi	Sincerity, simplicity

Based on Table 8, the religious values integrated into role-playing activities at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang reflect a variety of moral and spiritual principles tailored to the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners. Each teacher emphasizes different yet complementary religious values. Mrs. Indrawati focuses on sharing and empathy, Mrs. Husnul Fatimah emphasizes honesty and politeness, and Mrs. Hasrawati Basri promotes responsibility and gratitude. Meanwhile, Mrs. Kasmawati highlights the importance of tolerance and mutual respect, while Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi, as the Islamic Religious Education teacher, cultivates sincerity and simplicity as foundations of children's spiritual character.

These values are not delivered solely through verbal instruction but are embedded within contextual role-playing activities that are closely related to

children's everyday experiences. As a result, children can more easily understand, internalize, and practice these values both at school and at home.

4. Children's Responses to the Role-Playing Method

Children's responses to the religious values-based role-playing method demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm. They actively participated in learning activities, enjoyed the learning process, and exhibited positive behavioral changes in their social interactions.

Table 9. Children's Responses to Role-Playing Activities

Informant	Children's Responses
Mrs. Indrawati	Children were enthusiastic and caring toward friends
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah	Children enjoyed learning through play
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri	Children began to understand responsibility
Mrs. Kasmawati	Children became more sensitive and respectful toward peers
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi	Children demonstrated sincerity and gratitude

Based on Table 9, children's responses to the implementation of role playing at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang were overwhelmingly positive. Children enthusiastically participated in learning activities and actively engaged in the roles they performed. Mrs. Indrawati reported that children became more caring toward their peers, while Mrs. Husnul Fatimah emphasized that learning through play created an enjoyable and stress-free atmosphere.

Furthermore, according to Mrs. Hasrawati Basri, children began to understand the meaning of responsibility through the roles they performed, such as completing assigned tasks and following game rules. Mrs. Kasmawati also observed improvements in children's social sensitivity and mutual respect. Additionally, Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi noted that children increasingly demonstrated sincerity and gratitude in their daily activities.

These positive responses indicate that the role-playing method aligns well with the developmental world of young children and serves as an effective, meaningful, and enjoyable approach to character education while simultaneously stimulating children's social, emotional, and spiritual development.

5. The Impact of Role Playing on Children's Character Development

The implementation of religious values-based role playing has had a significant impact on children's character development. Children demonstrated improvements in

empathy, honesty, politeness, responsibility, tolerance, sincerity, and gratitude in their daily lives.

Table 10. Impact of Role Playing on Children's Character Development

Informant	Observed Impact
Mrs. Indrawati	Increased empathy and social skills
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah	Children became more honest and polite
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri	Children became more responsible and grateful
Mrs. Kasmawati	Children became more tolerant and respectful of differences
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi	Children became more sincere and caring

Based on Table 10, the impact of implementing religious values-based role playing at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang is clearly reflected in the character development of young children. Mrs. Indrawati reported significant improvements in children's empathy and social skills, particularly in interacting with and helping their peers. Mrs. Husnul Fatimah emphasized that children became more honest and polite in both speech and behavior.

In addition, Mrs. Hasrawati Basri observed that children increasingly demonstrated responsibility and gratitude in daily activities, such as maintaining cleanliness and completing assigned tasks. Mrs. Kasmawati also noted that children became more tolerant and respectful of individual differences among their peers. Furthermore, Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi reported that children exhibited greater sincerity and social concern.

These findings suggest that the role-playing method influences multiple dimensions of child development rather than a single aspect alone. By integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains within meaningful learning experiences, role playing contributes significantly to the holistic development of children's character.

C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Religious Values-Based Role-Playing Methods

1. Supporting Factors in the Implementation

Based on interviews with teachers at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Dulang, several factors support the implementation of role-playing methods based on religious values. These include a supportive school environment, children's readiness,

relevant learning materials, parental involvement, and active participation from children during learning activities.

Table 11. Supporting Factors for the Implementation of Role Playing

Informant	Supporting Factor	Description
Mrs. Indrawati, Class A Teacher	School environment support and teacher collaboration	A creative environment and collaboration among teachers help create enjoyable and educational learning experiences.
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah, Class A1 Teacher	Children's readiness and relevant learning materials	Active children and engaging learning materials facilitate understanding of religious values.
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri, Class B Teacher	Parental support	Parents reinforce religious values at home, strengthening children's internalization of character values.
Mrs. Kasmawati, Class B1 Teacher	Active child participation	Children who actively participate are more likely to understand and apply the values being taught.
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi, Islamic Education Teacher	Alignment between learning objectives and method	Role playing aligns well with learning objectives, allowing children to experience and practice religious values directly.

The findings indicate that a supportive learning environment, collaboration among teachers, parental involvement, children's readiness, and appropriate instructional materials significantly contribute to the successful implementation of role-playing activities. These factors help children understand and internalize religious values more effectively through meaningful learning experiences.

2. Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation

Despite its benefits, the implementation of role-playing methods also faces several challenges. These include limited facilities, time constraints, differences in children's readiness, and social or cultural factors that influence the learning process.

Table 12. Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Role Playing

Informant	Obstacle	Description
Mrs. Indrawati, Class A	Limited learning	Teaching aids are limited, requiring

Teacher	materials	teachers to utilize simple classroom objects.
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah, Class A1 Teacher	Limited space and facilities	Small classrooms and inadequate teaching aids restrict role-playing activities.
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri, Class B Teacher	Inappropriate teaching aids	Difficulty finding teaching aids that accurately reflect religious values and themes.
Mrs. Kasmawati, Class B1 Teacher	Limited funding	Budget constraints require teachers to create their own teaching aids.
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi, Islamic Education Teacher	Difficulty obtaining suitable teaching aids	Teachers often need to modify or design teaching aids independently.

The findings reveal that limitations in facilities, funding, learning resources, and classroom space remain major obstacles to implementing role-playing methods effectively. Teachers often need to be creative and resourceful in adapting available materials to support learning activities.

3. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Teachers have adopted several strategies to enhance the effectiveness of role-playing methods, including strengthening collaboration between teachers and parents, adjusting learning materials, applying individualized approaches, and increasing creativity in instructional practices.

Table 13. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers in Role-Playing Implementation

Informant	Strategy / Solution	Description
Mrs. Indrawati, Class A Teacher	Increased parental involvement and material adjustment	Parents provide support at home, while learning materials are adapted to children's characteristics.
Mrs. Husnul Fatimah, Class A1 Teacher	Providing additional practice time	Children are given more opportunities to practice and understand the values embedded in their roles.
Mrs. Hasrawati Basri, Class B Teacher	Individualized approaches and creative teaching aids	Special attention is given to children experiencing difficulties, using attractive teaching aids related to religious themes.

Mrs. Kasmawati, Class B1 Teacher	Teacher collaboration and varied methods	Teachers share ideas and develop enjoyable and effective role-playing activities.
Mrs. Mirnawati Dewi, Islamic Education Teacher	Adapting methods to children's characteristics	Learning activities are adjusted to children's different learning styles and developmental needs.

Based on the findings presented above, collaboration between teachers and parents, children's readiness, appropriate learning materials, and teacher creativity are key factors in the successful implementation of religious values-based role-playing methods. The strategies employed by teachers help overcome existing barriers and ensure that children can understand, internalize, and practice religious values effectively, thereby supporting character development from an early age.

DISCUSSION

A. Early Childhood Character Development at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang Kindergarten, Enrekang Regency

The findings revealed that the character development of early childhood learners at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang Kindergarten in Enrekang Regency has progressed significantly across various dimensions, including creativity, empathy, independence, and adaptability. Each class demonstrated distinctive characteristics: Class A exhibited high levels of creativity and curiosity, Class A1 showed strong social skills and empathy, Class B demonstrated independence and self-confidence, while Class B1 displayed greater adaptability and emotional resilience. These findings are consistent with Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development theory, which states that young children are in the initiative versus guilt stage, where they begin to develop initiative, creativity, and social interaction skills. The diverse character development observed also reflects the principle of individuality in early childhood education as stipulated in Indonesian Ministerial Regulation No. 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education, which emphasizes the holistic and integrative development of religious and moral values, physical-motor skills, cognition, language, and socio-emotional competencies. The values cultivated include creativity, empathy, cooperation, independence, courage, mutual respect, responsibility, spirituality, and faith. This finding aligns with Lickona's (2013) character education

framework, which emphasizes three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Indicators of positive character development were identified through children's curiosity, empathy, independence in decision-making, respectful attitudes toward others, and the practice of spiritual values in daily life. These findings support Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, which suggests that young children are in the pre-conventional stage, where they understand right and wrong based on direct consequences and external authority. Appropriate character education enables children to develop deeper moral understanding, including empathy and concern for others. This perspective is consistent with Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition and respect among human beings.

Challenges in character development include maintaining consistent habituation, addressing negative environmental influences, fostering self-confidence, accommodating diverse child characteristics, and overcoming limitations in instructional time and resources. The challenge of consistency aligns with Skinner's (1938) behaviorist theory, which highlights the importance of continuous reinforcement. Environmental influences can also be explained through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which argues that child development is shaped by interactions among multiple environmental systems, ranging from the microsystem (family and school) to the macrosystem (cultural values and media). Synergy among schools, families, and communities is therefore essential for effective character formation, as emphasized in Article 3 of Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System.

Social interactions among children at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang Kindergarten demonstrated positive dynamics characterized by cooperation, empathy, and mutual care. Children were observed sharing toys, helping peers experiencing difficulties, and resolving conflicts peacefully. These interaction patterns support Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which states that children learn through observation and imitation. The quality of these interactions is also consistent with Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills.

Furthermore, the longitudinal study conducted by Kochanska and Aksan (2006) found that children who internalize moral values and develop conscience during early childhood tend to exhibit more consistent prosocial behavior and stronger self-regulation later in life. The observed improvements in self-confidence, social

competence, empathy, independence, tolerance, and religious and moral practices among the children reinforce the importance of holistic, integrative, and value-based character education from an early age (Durlak et al., 2011).

B. Implementation of Religious Values-Based Role Playing

Role playing was implemented as a strategy to develop children's social skills, empathy, cooperation, honesty, and tolerance. Through role-playing activities, children were able to experience others' perspectives directly and learn constructive ways to resolve conflicts, consistent with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Additionally, the method aligns with Piaget's (1962) cognitive development theory, which posits that children in the preoperational stage primarily learn about the world through symbolic play and imaginative activities.

The implementation of religious values-based role playing at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang Kindergarten reflects a holistic integration of contemporary pedagogical approaches and Islamic educational values. Teachers utilized role-playing scenarios to teach sharing, honesty, politeness, cleanliness, caring for others, and mutual respect, which are consistent with the teachings of Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah (2:195) and Al-Ghazali's (1990) concept of moral education. These findings support Nucci and Narvaez's (2008) assertion that integrating religious values into educational practices strengthens the internalization of moral values among children.

The impact of this method was evident in children's daily behaviors, such as sharing toys, telling the truth, expressing gratitude, and helping peers voluntarily. Significant improvements were observed in empathy, honesty, politeness, responsibility, tolerance, sincerity, and gratitude. These findings are consistent with Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which suggests that enjoyable learning experiences that provide autonomy and satisfy children's needs for competence enhance intrinsic motivation and positive behavioral outcomes.

C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation

Several factors supported the implementation of the role-playing method, including:

- 1) A collaborative and supportive school environment.
- 2) Children's readiness and active participation.
- 3) Relevant and creative learning materials.
- 4) Support from parents and family members.

These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the interaction between environmental systems in shaping child development. Collaboration between teachers and parents creates consistency in the application of religious values, thereby facilitating the internalization of these values among children, as emphasized in Indonesian Ministerial Regulation No. 137 of 2014.

The study also identified several challenges, including limited funding, inadequate classroom space, insufficient teaching aids, time constraints, and variations in children's readiness and abilities. These findings correspond with Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences Theory, which emphasizes that children possess diverse intelligences and learning styles. Additionally, local cultural values emphasizing cooperation, mutual assistance, and politeness served as supplementary supporting factors. This observation is consistent with Rogoff's (2003) perspective regarding the significant role of culture in child development.

To address these challenges, teachers employed various strategies, including strengthening parental involvement, adapting learning materials to children's developmental characteristics, providing individualized support, fostering collaboration among teachers, and creatively utilizing available teaching aids. These comprehensive and collaborative approaches contributed to enhancing the effectiveness of role-playing activities in promoting character development among young children.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study conducted at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Dulang Kindergarten in Enrekang Regency, it can be concluded that early childhood character development has progressed positively across various dimensions, including creativity, empathy, independence, self-confidence, adaptability, and emotional resilience. Each classroom group demonstrated distinct character traits aligned with the developmental stages of the children. Class A showed stronger creativity and curiosity, Class A1 exhibited higher levels of empathy and cooperation, Class B demonstrated greater independence and self-confidence, while Class B1 displayed better adaptability and emotional resilience. Overall, the learning activities implemented at the school successfully fostered social, moral, and spiritual values among the children, although challenges such as maintaining consistency in character-building practices and addressing external environmental influences remain.

The study also revealed that the implementation of a religious values-based role-playing method was effective in promoting character development among young children. Through role-playing activities designed to reflect real-life situations, children were able to understand and practice religious values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, politeness, tolerance, sincerity, gratitude, and social care. This method provided meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences because children were not merely receiving information verbally but were actively experiencing and applying these values in their daily social interactions. As a result, role-playing proved to be an effective instructional strategy for fostering children's character development in a holistic manner, encompassing social, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

The successful implementation of the religious values-based role-playing method was influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors included a positive and collaborative school environment, active involvement of teachers and parents, children's readiness to participate in learning activities, and the availability of learning materials that were relevant to the developmental needs of young children. Conversely, the main obstacles included limited facilities and teaching aids, restricted classroom space, insufficient instructional time, and differences in children's levels of understanding and readiness. To address these challenges, teachers adopted various strategies, such as strengthening collaboration with parents, adapting learning materials and methods to children's individual characteristics, providing personalized support for children requiring additional assistance, and creatively utilizing available resources and instructional media. Therefore, strong collaboration among schools, teachers, parents, and the wider community is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of character development through religious values-based role-playing activities in early childhood education.

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