

Strengthening Honesty Character in Early Childhood Through Islamic Religious Education: A Qualitative Case Study from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT : Honesty is one of the fundamental moral values that should be cultivated during early childhood, as this developmental stage plays a crucial role in shaping lifelong character. Although Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has long been recognized as an important medium for character development, empirical evidence explaining how IRE contributes to fostering honesty among young children within authentic educational settings remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining the implementation of IRE and its contribution to honesty character formation in an Islamic kindergarten. This study employed a qualitative case study design conducted at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Enrekang Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and school staff, and document analysis. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure research trustworthiness, source triangulation, method triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking were applied. The findings reveal that Islamic Religious Education contributes substantially to the development of honesty through the integration of Islamic values into daily learning activities, teacher role modelling, play-based learning, storytelling about the prophets, role-playing, and continuous habituation practices. Collaboration between teachers and parents further strengthens the consistency of honesty education across school and home environments. The study also identifies that authentic behavioural assessment and a supportive religious school culture enhance the internalization of honesty among young children. The study demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education functions not only as a medium for religious knowledge transmission but also as an effective framework for cultivating honesty through developmentally appropriate, experiential, and value-based learning. The findings contribute to the growing literature on Islamic character education by proposing an integrated approach that combines school culture, teacher exemplification, daily habituation, and family engagement to strengthen honesty character development during early childhood.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Honesty Character, Early Childhood Education, Character Development, Qualitative Research.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is the cornerstone of developing a generation with noble morals, integrity, and strong ethical values. Within the context of Islamic education, character formation is inseparable from the spiritual and moral principles derived

from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Lickona (2013) argues that strong character is cultivated through the internalization of core moral values that are consistently practiced from an early age. Among these values, honesty is one of the most fundamental, as it serves as the basis for developing independence, responsibility, and trustworthiness. Honesty is not merely an individual moral virtue but also a fundamental pillar for building a just and dignified society. Therefore, instilling honesty through Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) in early childhood education institutions is essential for nurturing children with strong moral character.

The importance of honesty in Islam is explicitly emphasized in Qur'an Surah Al-Ahzab (33:70–71), which commands believers to fear Allah and speak truthfully. In his exegesis, Al-Qurthubi (2006) explains that the phrase **qaulan sadidan** refers to speech that is truthful, upright, and free from falsehood. According to him, honesty in speech constitutes the foundation of righteous deeds and human salvation. This principle has significant implications for early childhood education because children begin to develop their understanding of right and wrong during this developmental stage. Educational practices that cultivate honesty from an early age encourage children to develop habits of speaking and acting truthfully, allowing honesty to become an integral part of their daily behavior rather than merely a theoretical concept.

Beyond the command to speak truthfully, the Qur'an also highlights the importance of a truthful environment in shaping character. Surah At-Taubah (9:119) instructs believers to associate with those who are truthful. Ibn Kathir (2003) interprets this verse as emphasizing the obligation to emulate individuals who demonstrate honesty in their intentions, words, and actions. An environment characterized by honesty significantly influences children's character development, particularly during early childhood. Children acquire values through social interaction and by observing the behavior of those around them. Consequently, teachers and parents play strategic roles as moral role models whose honest behavior is likely to be imitated by children throughout the process of character formation.

Honesty is also closely associated with the Islamic value of *"amanah"* (trustworthiness), as stated in Surah Al-Anfal (8:27), which prohibits betrayal of Allah, His Messenger, and entrusted responsibilities. Ibn Abbas interprets this verse as a warning that dishonesty represents both a moral and spiritual violation. The concept of *"amanah"* reflects an individual's integrity in fulfilling responsibilities and preserving trust toward both Allah and fellow human beings. In early childhood education, this value can be fostered through simple habitual practices, such as returning borrowed belongings, admitting mistakes, and taking responsibility for assigned tasks. Such daily

routines provide effective opportunities for nurturing children's moral awareness and developing honesty as a lasting character trait.

The centrality of honesty in Islam is further reinforced through a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, which states that honesty leads to righteousness and ultimately to Paradise, whereas falsehood leads to wickedness and eventually to Hellfire. The narration emphasizes that honesty is a virtue developed through continuous practice and habitual behavior. Within educational settings, this hadith provides a strong foundation for implementing character education through consistent and repetitive learning experiences. Islamic Religious Education therefore plays a strategic role in guiding children to practice honesty through learning activities that are practical, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate for young learners.

From a policy perspective, Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education aims to develop learners' competencies while fostering national character and civilization with dignity. The Government of Indonesia (2003) identifies character education as an integral component of national educational objectives. This commitment is reinforced by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 137 of 2014, which emphasizes the development of religious and moral values in early childhood education. These policies demonstrate the government's strong commitment to character development, including the cultivation of honesty. Accordingly, early childhood education institutions bear significant responsibility for integrating honesty into every aspect of the learning process as part of children's holistic personality development.

From a theoretical perspective, the development of honesty can be explained through Social Learning Theory. Bandura (1986) argues that children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation of significant role models. In early childhood education, teachers and parents serve as the primary models influencing children's development of honest behavior. When children consistently observe honesty being practiced by adults, they are more likely to internalize and adopt the same values. This perspective aligns with Islamic educational principles, which emphasize exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*) as the primary method for cultivating moral character. Consequently, honesty education should be demonstrated through authentic daily practices rather than relying solely on verbal instruction.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in fostering honesty among young children. Nurdin (2019) in a study conducted in several Islamic kindergartens in Jakarta, found that implementing character education grounded in Islamic values significantly improved children's honest behavior. Nevertheless, preliminary observations conducted at TK Aisyiyah 2

Pasui, Enrekang Regency, indicate that children's honest behavior remains inconsistent. Conventional instructional approaches and limited parental involvement continue to pose substantial challenges to the effective development of honesty. Therefore, investigating the role of Islamic Religious Education in cultivating honesty among early childhood learners is both timely and relevant for identifying more effective and contextually appropriate educational strategies.

METHODS

This study was conducted at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Buntu Batu District, Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research site was selected because of its relevance to the study's focus on the development of honesty as a character trait through Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam, PAI) in early childhood education. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide a systematic and comprehensive description of naturally occurring phenomena without manipulating research variables (Sugiyono, 2019). A qualitative descriptive design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how Islamic Religious Education contributes to fostering honesty through classroom instruction, daily routines, teacher role modeling, and social interactions within the school environment.

The qualitative approach served as the conceptual framework guiding both data collection and analysis. According to Azwar (2017), a research approach reflects the researcher's perspective toward the phenomenon under investigation and shapes the overall research process. This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach that emphasizes the collection of data in the form of words, behaviors, and participants' experiences. To strengthen the interpretation of findings, pedagogical and psychological perspectives were also employed to examine instructional practices in Islamic Religious Education and children's moral development in relation to honesty (Mulyasa, 2018).

The study was conducted between October 2025 and January 2026. This period allowed sufficient time for prolonged engagement in the field, repeated observations, and the collection of rich and contextualized data. Creswell (2014) argues that qualitative research requires sustained interaction with participants to develop a comprehensive understanding of the social context in which the phenomenon occurs.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, classroom teachers, and observations of children's participation in learning activities and daily character-building practices. Secondary data consisted of school

documents, curriculum materials, lesson plans, activity reports, institutional records, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and previous studies relevant to the research topic (Arikunto, 2016).

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary research instrument, assuming direct responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Sugiyono (2019) emphasizes that the researcher is the most appropriate instrument because of the ability to interpret meanings, social interactions, and contextual realities comprehensively. To support the data collection process, interview guides, observation protocols, and documentation checklists were used as supplementary instruments. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to ensure the completeness and credibility of the information obtained (Haryono, 2020).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher organized, selected, and categorized the data according to themes related to the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering honesty among young children. The organized data were subsequently presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and the development of meaningful conclusions.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed, including source triangulation, method triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checking. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence, while member checking involved confirming the findings with participants to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These procedures were intended to enhance the study's credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

A. Implementation of Islamic Religious Education at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Enrekang Regency

1. Integration of Islamic Values into Daily Activities

The findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui is achieved through the integration of Islamic values into children's daily activities. Rather than being limited to the transmission of religious knowledge, Islamic education is implemented as a continuous process of nurturing attitudes and behaviors that reflect Islamic moral principles. Core values such as

honesty, compassion, respect, and patience are consistently reinforced through routine activities, including collective prayers, storytelling about the prophets, and positive social interactions among children. These findings suggest that integrating Islamic values into everyday experiences enables children to understand and practice religious teachings in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

2. An Islamic Values-Based Curriculum

The findings further reveal that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui is designed according to the developmental characteristics of young children. Learning content focuses on introducing fundamental Islamic teachings, including daily prayers, moral conduct (akhlaq), and stories of the prophets. Rather than being taught as a separate academic subject, Islamic values are embedded throughout classroom learning and children's daily interactions. Character development and the cultivation of religious habits constitute the central features of the curriculum, allowing religious education to become an integral part of children's everyday behavior instead of remaining merely theoretical knowledge.

3. Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Methods

Field observations demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education is delivered using instructional methods appropriate for early childhood learners, who acquire knowledge primarily through play and direct experiences. Teachers employ play-based learning, singing, storytelling, and role-playing activities to introduce Islamic values in engaging ways. These instructional approaches increase children's participation, motivation, and enthusiasm during learning activities. Furthermore, the use of visual and audio learning media, such as illustrated storybooks, Islamic songs, and educational images, enhances children's understanding and retention of religious values.

4. School Policies Supporting Islamic Religious Education

The study also found that the school has established policies that consistently support the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. Daily school activities begin with collective prayer, Islamic greetings (salam), and the practice of appropriate Islamic manners in everyday communication. In addition to regular classroom instruction, the school organizes various religious activities, including celebrations of Islamic holy days and Qur'anic recitation programs. These institutional policies foster a religious school culture that facilitates the internalization of Islamic values in children's daily lives.

5. Parental Involvement in Religious Education

The findings indicate that parental involvement is a crucial supporting factor in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui. Parents participate through regular school meetings, joint religious activities, and ongoing

communication regarding their children's developmental progress. They are encouraged to reinforce at home the Islamic values and religious practices introduced at school. This collaborative partnership between the school and families contributes to the consistency of religious education and strengthens the development of children's religious character across both educational and home environments.

6. Assessment of Children's Spiritual and Moral Development

The findings show that the evaluation of Islamic Religious Education is conducted primarily through direct observation of children's behavior and social interactions during daily activities. Teachers assess children's spiritual and moral development using behavioral indicators, including the ability to recite prayers, demonstrate generosity, practice politeness, and show respect toward others. Instead of relying on written examinations, assessment is based on developmental documentation and regular communication with parents. This authentic assessment approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how effectively Islamic values have been internalized by young children.

7. Strategies for Addressing Implementation Challenges

The study identifies differences in family backgrounds and home religious practices as the primary challenges in implementing Islamic Religious Education. To address these challenges, teachers adopt inclusive, supportive, and communicative approaches rather than coercive methods. The school also maintains close communication with parents while implementing creative and enjoyable learning strategies that accommodate children's diverse backgrounds. These approaches have proven effective in minimizing implementation barriers and enhancing the successful delivery of Islamic Religious Education at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui.

B. The Impact of Islamic Religious Education Teaching Methods on the Development of Honesty Among Young Children at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Enrekang Regency

1. The Relationship Between Teaching Methods and the Development of Honesty

The findings indicate that the teaching methods employed in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui are closely associated with the development of honesty among young children. The instructional approach is holistic and experiential, enabling honesty to be learned not only through verbal instruction but also through daily practice. Children are consistently encouraged to tell the truth while playing, participating in classroom activities, and interacting with their teachers and peers. Furthermore, teachers' consistent demonstration of honest behavior serves as a powerful model that reinforces the internalization of honesty as a core moral value.

2. Teaching Methods Used to Foster Honesty

The study found that several instructional methods are commonly used to cultivate honesty, including storytelling about the prophets, role-playing, guided discussions, and the daily practice of truthful communication. Stories of the prophets, particularly the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Al-Amin (the Trustworthy), provide children with concrete illustrations of honesty in everyday life. Role-playing activities allow children to practice honest behavior in various social situations through direct experience. These methods are particularly effective because they align with the developmental characteristics of young children, who learn primarily through imitation, play, and experiential learning.

3. Daily Habituation Activities That Promote Honesty

The findings further demonstrate that the development of honesty is strengthened through routine habituation activities integrated into children's daily experiences. Activities such as morning truth-sharing sessions, reflective conversations after classroom activities, and simple discussions about children's feelings and personal experiences encourage them to express themselves honestly. These practices help children communicate their thoughts and emotions without fear of negative consequences, allowing honesty to develop naturally as part of their everyday behavior.

4. Assessment of Children's Honesty Development

Children's honesty was assessed primarily through direct observation of their behavior across various situations encountered during school activities. Teachers evaluated children's willingness to admit mistakes, express their feelings honestly, and demonstrate openness in social interactions with peers and adults. In addition to school-based observations, teachers regularly communicated with parents to determine whether honest behaviors were consistently displayed at home. This ongoing qualitative assessment provided an authentic understanding of children's moral development and the gradual internalization of honesty.

5. Changes in Children's Honesty Following Islamic Religious Education

The study revealed significant positive changes in children's honesty after participating in Islamic Religious Education activities. Children who had previously been reluctant to admit mistakes or tell the truth gradually became more willing to communicate honestly in different situations. They also demonstrated greater confidence in expressing their feelings, opinions, and personal experiences. These findings suggest that values-based religious instruction combined with consistent habituation practices contributes meaningfully to the development of honesty among young children.

6. The Contribution of Islamic Religious Education to the Development of Honesty

Islamic Religious Education made a substantial contribution to the development of children's honesty by strengthening their understanding of faith (iman) and moral character (akhlaq). Children came to recognize honesty not merely as a social expectation but as a religious obligation and an act of worship. Continuous instruction, combined with teachers' consistent role modeling, enabled children to internalize honesty as an essential value guiding their behavior both at school and within their families.

7. Challenges and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

The findings identified differences in family backgrounds, parenting practices, and children's fear of punishment as the primary challenges to fostering honesty. To address these barriers, the school adopted a collaborative approach that actively involved parents, created a safe and supportive learning environment, and provided positive reinforcement whenever children demonstrated honest behavior. These strategies effectively reduced obstacles to character development and promoted the consistent practice of honesty across both school and home settings.

C. Strategies for Optimizing the Role of Islamic Religious Education in Fostering Honesty Among Young Children at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Enrekang Regency

1. Strengthening the Role of Islamic Religious Education in Character Development

The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui plays a strategic role in fostering honesty among young children. Rather than focusing solely on the acquisition of religious knowledge, IRE emphasizes the internalization of Islamic values through habituation and exemplary practice. Honesty is introduced as both a religious obligation and an act of worship, enabling children to recognize truthful behavior as a moral and spiritual responsibility. This approach provides children with a strong foundation for character development from an early age.

2. Values-Based and Role Model-Oriented Instructional Strategies

One of the primary strategies for optimizing the role of IRE is the implementation of values-based instruction supported by teacher role modeling. Teachers integrate stories of the prophets, particularly the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Al-Amin (the Trustworthy), into classroom learning to illustrate the meaning and importance of honesty. In addition, teachers consistently demonstrate honesty, openness, and integrity in their daily interactions with children. Such exemplary behavior encourages children to imitate positive moral conduct through observation and repeated social interaction.

3. Habituation and Daily Honesty-Oriented Activities

The optimization of IRE is further supported through routine activities that cultivate honesty in children's everyday lives. These activities include collective prayers, morning truth-sharing sessions, self-reflection following classroom activities, and simple discussions about children's experiences and emotions. Such routines create a supportive and psychologically safe environment in which children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, experiences, and mistakes honestly without fear of criticism or punishment. Through consistent repetition, honesty gradually becomes an integral part of children's daily behavior.

4. Active and Experiential Learning Approaches

Another important strategy involves the use of active and experiential learning methods, including role-playing, illustrated storytelling, guided discussions, and simulations of everyday social situations. These instructional approaches provide children with opportunities to practice honesty directly in meaningful contexts rather than merely learning about it conceptually. Experiential learning is particularly appropriate for early childhood education because young children learn most effectively through play, observation, and authentic experiences.

5. Collaboration Among Schools, Families, and the Community

The findings demonstrate that collaboration among schools, families, and the wider community is essential for optimizing the development of honesty. The school maintains close communication with parents through regular meetings, joint religious activities, and continuous updates regarding children's developmental progress. Community participation through social activities, family religious gatherings, and cooperative community programs further reinforces the consistent practice of honesty across multiple environments. This collaborative partnership ensures that children receive consistent moral guidance both inside and outside the classroom.

6. The Role of Extracurricular Activities and School Habituation Programs

Extracurricular activities and school-wide habituation programs also make significant contributions to strengthening the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. Activities such as children's Qur'anic study groups, prayer competitions, storytelling about the prophets, religious drama performances, and community service initiatives provide meaningful opportunities for children to practice honesty in enjoyable and engaging settings. Through these experiences, honesty is not only taught as an abstract concept but also cultivated as a habitual pattern of behavior.

7. Strengthening Teachers' Professional Competence

The optimization of IRE is further supported through teachers' professional development and ongoing training. Professional learning opportunities enable teachers to deepen their understanding of age-appropriate character education strategies while enhancing their ability to create positive learning environments that encourage honesty. With stronger pedagogical competence, teachers are better equipped to integrate honesty consistently into classroom instruction, daily routines, and interactions with young children.

8. Support from Government and Educational Institutions

Government agencies and educational institutions also contribute significantly to strengthening honesty-based character education. Their support includes curriculum policies that integrate character education, the provision of appropriate instructional materials, professional development programs for teachers, and learning facilities that promote effective educational practices. These forms of institutional support enable schools to implement Islamic Religious Education more effectively and sustainably in promoting children's moral development.

9. Areas for Further Improvement

Although various strategies have been implemented successfully, the findings suggest that several aspects require further improvement. These include increasing parents' active involvement in character education, expanding the use of interactive instructional methods, developing more systematic approaches to assessing children's character development, and providing broader opportunities for children to participate in community-based social activities. Strengthening these areas is expected to enhance the continuity of honesty education across school, family, and community settings, thereby promoting more sustainable character development among young children.

DISCUSSION

Character education is a systematic effort to develop individuals who possess strong moral values, ethical principles, and social responsibility. Lickona (2013) argues that character education extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to include the development of positive attitudes and habitual behaviors reflected in everyday life. In the context of early childhood education, character education is particularly important because early childhood represents a critical developmental period during which fundamental personal values are established. Mulyasa (2018) emphasizes that character education is more effective when introduced during early childhood, as children are highly receptive to imitation and habit formation. Consequently, character education should adopt a holistic approach that integrates cognitive,

affective, social, and spiritual dimensions to facilitate the internalization of moral values.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a central role in character education because Islamic teachings comprehensively address moral values and ethical conduct. According to Muhaimin (2012) IRE is intended not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to shape learners' attitudes and behaviors in accordance with Islamic principles. At the early childhood level, IRE serves as the foundation for developing moral character, including honesty. Nata (2014) argues that the internalization of religious values during early childhood has a lasting influence on children's future character development. Therefore, integrating Islamic Religious Education throughout the kindergarten curriculum represents a strategic approach to cultivating moral values in a continuous and meaningful manner.

The findings of this study indicate that integrating Islamic Religious Education into the daily routines of TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, Enrekang Regency, contributes significantly to the development of honesty among young children. Honesty is cultivated not only through formal classroom instruction but also through routine activities such as collective prayers, storytelling about the prophets, and daily social interactions. These findings support Musfiroh's (2017) conclusion that habituation and teacher role modeling are among the most effective approaches to character education in early childhood settings. Within a religious and supportive learning environment, children come to understand honesty as a value that should be practiced consistently rather than merely memorized as an abstract concept.

The instructional methods employed at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, including role-playing and storytelling about the prophets, were found to be highly effective in fostering honesty. Bruner (1966) proposed that children learn most effectively through meaningful direct experiences. Through role-playing activities, children have opportunities to practice honest behavior in realistic and enjoyable situations, thereby strengthening their understanding of moral values through active participation. Similarly, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory suggests that children acquire behaviors by observing and imitating significant role models. By presenting the prophets, particularly Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as exemplary models of honesty, teachers provide concrete examples that children can emulate in their daily lives.

The assessment of honesty at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui is conducted primarily through systematic observation of children's behavior during everyday activities. This assessment approach aligns with the principles of authentic assessment commonly recommended for early childhood education. Mulyasa (2017) emphasizes that character assessment should focus on observable changes in children's attitudes and

behaviors rather than solely on cognitive achievement. Positive reinforcement and praise for honest behavior were found to increase children's motivation to maintain truthful conduct. Furthermore, collaboration with parents during the assessment process enhances consistency between the values reinforced at school and those practiced at home, thereby strengthening children's overall character development.

Despite the positive implementation of Islamic Religious Education at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui, several challenges remain. One of the primary obstacles identified in this study concerns differences in family backgrounds and home environments. Daradjat (2015) argues that the family environment plays a decisive role in determining the effectiveness of school-based character education. Consequently, maintaining effective communication and collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to ensure consistency in children's moral development across different settings. Additionally, teachers should continuously innovate their instructional approaches to sustain children's interest and engagement. Creative, child-centered, and contextually relevant learning experiences are essential for promoting the long-term development of honesty among young learners.

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education at TK Aisyiyah 2 Pasui plays a significant role in fostering honesty among young children. A holistic educational approach that combines habituation, teacher role modeling, play-based learning, and active collaboration with parents effectively facilitates the internalization of honesty as a core moral value. These findings are consistent with Lickona's (2013) assertion that successful character education requires the collective involvement of schools, families, and communities. Through sustained collaboration among these stakeholders, Islamic Religious Education can contribute to developing a generation that is not only academically competent but also characterized by strong moral integrity, honesty, and ethical responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a pivotal role in fostering honesty among young children through an integrated approach that combines values-based instruction, teacher role modelling, daily habituation, and active collaboration with parents. Rather than functioning solely as a subject for transmitting religious knowledge, IRE serves as a comprehensive framework for nurturing children's moral awareness and encouraging the internalization of honesty as a fundamental Islamic value. The implementation of developmentally appropriate learning strategies, including storytelling, role-playing, experiential learning, and authentic behavioural assessment, enables children to practice honesty naturally within meaningful social interactions.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on Islamic character education by providing empirical evidence that the successful development of honesty requires a holistic educational ecosystem involving schools, families, and the broader community. The study also extends the application of Social Learning Theory within the context of Islamic early childhood education by demonstrating that consistent teacher exemplification and positive school culture significantly influence children's moral development. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating religious values into everyday educational practices rather than limiting character education to formal instructional activities.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that early childhood education institutions should strengthen school-based character education through systematic habituation programs, continuous teacher professional development, authentic assessment of children's moral behaviour, and sustainable partnerships with parents. Educational policymakers are also encouraged to support the implementation of Islamic character education by providing curriculum guidance, teacher training, and institutional policies that promote the integration of moral values into early childhood learning environments.

This study is limited to a single kindergarten in Enrekang Regency using a qualitative case study approach; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. Future studies are recommended to involve multiple educational institutions from different regions, employ comparative or mixed-methods research designs, and examine additional factors that influence children's honesty development, including parenting styles, digital learning environments, and socio-cultural diversity. Such investigations will provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective strategies for strengthening honesty character through Islamic Religious Education across diverse educational settings.

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