



The Transformation of Early Childhood Character Education through Parenting Styles An Islamic Educational Perspective

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Keywords:

Character Education; Early Childhood; Islamic Education; Parenting Practices; Qualitative Case Study.

Abstract: Character formation in early childhood requires consistent educational practices within both family and school environments, particularly through parenting practices that translate moral and religious values into everyday behavior. This study aimed to analyze and describe the role of parenting practices in shaping the character of early childhood learners at PAUD Janitra. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data collected through observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that character formation was supported by democratic parenting practices involving communication, role modeling, habituation, discipline, affection, and guidance, complemented by religious practices and school-based reinforcement. However, character development was constrained by limited parental time, digital exposure, peer influence, socioeconomic conditions, and limited educational resources. The study concludes that integrated collaboration between parents and early childhood educators is essential for sustaining religious and character education in children's everyday environments.

Kata Kunci:

Anak Usia Dini; Pendidikan Islam; Pendidikan Karakter; Pola Asuh Orang Tua; Studi Kasus Kualitatif.

Abstrak: Pembentukan karakter pada anak usia dini memerlukan praktik pendidikan yang konsisten dalam lingkungan keluarga dan sekolah, terutama melalui pola asuh yang mampu menerjemahkan nilai moral dan keagamaan ke dalam perilaku sehari-hari. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan peranan pola asuh orang tua dalam membentuk karakter anak usia dini di PAUD Janitra. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembentukan karakter didukung oleh pola asuh demokratis melalui komunikasi, keteladanan, pembiasaan, kedisiplinan, kasih sayang, dan bimbingan, serta diperkuat melalui praktik keagamaan dan kegiatan sekolah. Pembentukan karakter juga menghadapi kendala berupa keterbatasan waktu orang tua, paparan teknologi, pengaruh teman sebaya, kondisi sosial ekonomi, dan keterbatasan sumber daya pendidikan. Penelitian menegaskan pentingnya sinergi orang tua dan pendidik dalam memperkuat pendidikan karakter dan nilai keislaman anak.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education in early childhood is an important concern because children's moral, social, and religious dispositions are developed through repeated experiences within their immediate environments (Qusyairi et al., 2026) . The family is particularly significant as the child's earliest social and educational setting (Jeong et al., 2021) , where communication, behavior, discipline, and values are continuously experienced. Parents therefore function as primary educators, while the rapid physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of early childhood makes environmental stimulation particularly consequential (Jeong et al., 2021) . Character education cannot consequently be placed solely within formal institutions but must also be understood as a process embedded in everyday family interactions, with parenting serving as an important mechanism through which values are introduced, modeled, habituated, and reflected in children's behavior (Qusyairi et al., 2026) .

Despite this importance, parenting practices do not always involve balanced communication, appropriate discipline, and constructive modeling. Children may experience authoritarian practices characterized by strong obedience demands and limited communication (Baumrind, 1966), or excessive permissiveness in which boundaries are insufficiently established. These conditions may be influenced by occupational demands, limited family time, digital media, peers, socioeconomic conditions, and parental educational background. This issue was also evident at PAUD Janitra, where preliminary observations and interviews identified differences in children's character and parenting practices. Some children demonstrated impolite language, resistance to direction, and aggressive interactions, while some parents provided communication, guidance, explanations, and opportunities for responsibility and independence. Character education was simultaneously reinforced through prayer, Qur'anic learning, memorization, discipline, queuing, and task completion. These conditions provide an empirical basis for examining character formation as an ongoing process within the interaction between family and school.



Previous studies have established the importance of parenting and environmental influences in children's character development (Masnawati & Masfufah, 2023) , including the roles of family, school, and community, as well as differences between democratic or authoritative and authoritarian parenting. Research such as (Aisyah, 2025) has examined the relationship between parenting and children's character formation, while studies of spiritual education have highlighted the relevance of religiously oriented parenting for children's interpersonal development (Rich et al., 2024). However, existing studies have largely examined parenting in terms of general influence, parenting-style categories, or parental involvement, while less attention has been given to how Islamic and character values are enacted through everyday parenting practices and subsequently reinforced at school. (Mu'min et al., 2025; Nudin, 2020; Sibli et al., 2026) , providing less attention to how character education is enacted through everyday practices and how religious values are integrated into those practices. The literature also provides limited examination of continuity between values modeled and habituated at home and those reinforced at school (Pusztai et al., 2024a).

This study addresses this gap by examining the process linking parental modeling, communication, habituation, discipline, affection, and religious practices with children's observable character, while also considering the continuity between family and school environments. Accordingly, the study contributes a process-oriented account of parenting as family-based Islamic character education rather than merely as a classification of parenting styles. Its state of the art lies in examining how role modeling, communication, habituation, discipline, affection, guidance, and religious practices transform Islamic and character values into everyday behavior, while these values are reinforced through school practices. This process-oriented perspective shifts attention from determining which parenting style is “best” toward understanding how parenting becomes an educational medium through which children experience and practice values within interconnected family and school environments.





Accordingly, this study examines how parenting practices contribute to character education among early childhood learners, particularly through processes of modeling, communication, habituation, and reinforcement. The study proposes that character formation is more likely to be sustained when guidance and appropriate boundaries are combined with communication, affection, role modeling, habituation, and opportunities for responsibility and independence, alongside compatible school practices. Without assuming a simple causal relationship, the study contributes theoretically by connecting parenting practices with family-based Islamic character education and emphasizing the relational and contextual processes through which values become everyday behavior. Practically, it provides evidence to support greater coherence between parents and early childhood educators in religious habituation, communication, discipline, and supervision of children's social and digital environments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how parenting practices contributed to character formation among early childhood learners at PAUD Janitra. The qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the phenomenon was examined within its natural family and educational context (Yin, 2018), focusing on parenting practices, children's observable behaviors, and the interaction between home and school environments. PAUD Janitra was selected as the research site because it provided a relevant setting for examining the continuity of character education between parenting practices at home and character-building activities at school. The investigation focused on how character-related values were introduced, habituated, reinforced, and manifested in children's everyday behavior.

The participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in children's character education within the family and school contexts. The participants included 3 parents and early childhood teachers. Data were collected during August, 2026. Parents were selected based on their active role in children's daily upbringing, while teachers were selected





based on their direct involvement in character-building activities at PAUD Janitra. Observations were conducted during 1 month, and structured interviews were conducted using a predetermined interview guide. These procedures were intended to obtain complementary evidence concerning parenting practices, children's behaviors, and the continuity of character education between home and school.

Empirical data were collected through observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Participants and information sources were selected based on their direct relevance to parenting and early childhood character formation within the family and school contexts. Observation focused on children's behaviors and educational practices related to interaction, discipline, habituation, politeness, religious practices, independence, responsibility, and social behavior. Structured interviews used a predetermined guide addressing parenting practices, communication, discipline, habituation, religious education, and factors affecting children's character development. Documentation provided supporting information concerning the research setting and character education activities. Field notes, interview records, and documentary materials constituted the primary empirical evidence, while published books and scholarly literature were used only as conceptual references.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively through data preparation and coding, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview materials were organized and transcribed, while observational and documentary records were compiled according to the research focus. The data were then coded to identify recurring patterns concerning parenting practices, character formation, religious habituation, supporting conditions, and inhibiting factors. Relevant information was selected, simplified, and grouped into thematic categories before being displayed to facilitate comparison across observations, interviews, and documents. Conclusions were drawn from recurring patterns and



continuously checked against the field records to ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in the empirical evidence.

The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through the use of multiple data collection techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), namely observation, structured interviews, and documentation. Evidence concerning parenting practices and children's character formation was examined across different empirical records to identify consistencies and discrepancies. Particular attention was given to recurring evidence concerning parental communication, role modeling, habituation, discipline, affection, religious practices, and children's behavioral responses. Systematic transcription, coding, categorization, and verification of emerging conclusions further ensured that the reported findings remained traceable to the empirical data collected during the study.

RESULT

Parenting Practices and Character Formation among Early Childhood Learners

Data from observations, structured interviews, and documentation indicated that character formation occurred through children's daily interactions with parents and was reinforced through school activities. The observed character dimensions included politeness, religiosity, independence, respect, discipline, responsibility, and self-control. However, these characteristics were not consistently demonstrated by all children. Some children were still observed using inappropriate language, showing resistance to direction, displaying physical aggression toward peers, and experiencing difficulty following established rules. These variations indicate that character formation was an ongoing process shaped by differences in children's everyday experiences within family and school environments.

Character formation was further reflected in repeated practices within the family and school environments. At home, parents modeled appropriate behavior through their words and actions and habituated children to greeting others, saying goodbye before leaving, using polite



language, respecting others, and maintaining communication. Religious values were integrated into daily routines, including prayer before meals and the introduction of religious practices. At school, these practices were reinforced through Qur'anic learning, prayer, memorization of short Qur'anic chapters, compliance with school rules, queuing, and completion of assigned tasks. The findings therefore show that character education was enacted through repeated experiences across both family and school environments rather than through verbal instruction alone.

Alongside supportive parenting practices, variations in less supportive parenting practices were also identified. Some parents were reported to apply highly controlling practices characterized by strong demands for obedience, parental decision-making, and limited verbal communication. Conversely, some children were reported to receive excessive indulgence, have their wishes consistently fulfilled, or be allowed to play without clear time limits. These practices were found alongside behavioral manifestations such as arguing, using inappropriate language, hitting peers, and difficulty following rules. The field data therefore demonstrated variations in parenting practices, ranging from approaches that provided communication, guidance, independence, and responsibility to practices characterized by excessive control or unrestricted permissiveness, indicating that children's character formation at PAUD Janitra was shaped through diverse parenting experiences within the family and their reinforcement through educational practices at school.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Character Formation through Parenting

The supporting factors in character formation included parental personality, role modeling, discipline, habituation, a conducive family atmosphere, and educator involvement. Parental personality was reflected in guidance, affection, and communication, while role modeling was demonstrated through appropriate parental behavior and language. Discipline involved directing children when inappropriate behavior occurred and explaining appropriate



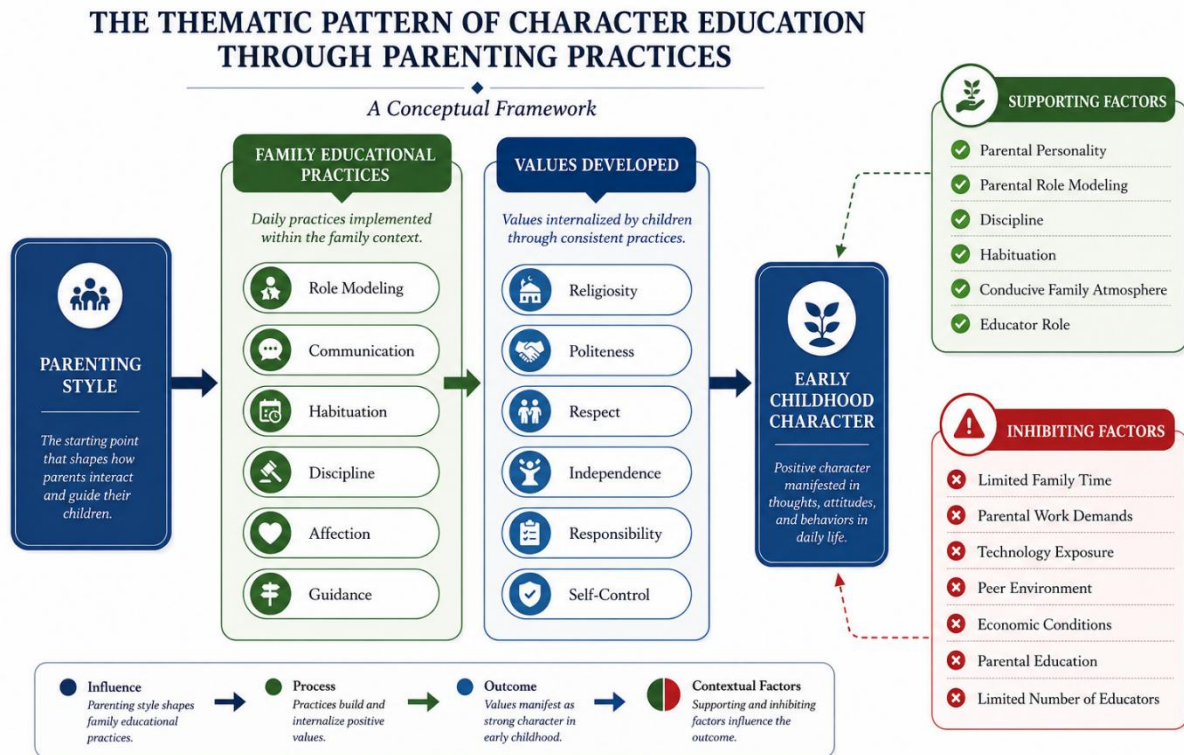


alternatives, while habituation was developed through repeated daily practices such as greeting, saying goodbye, using polite language, and maintaining communication.

Religious practices constituted an important component of character education within both family and school environments. At home, children were habituated to recite prayers before meals, recognize religious values, use appropriate language, and respect older people and peers. At school, character formation was reinforced through Qur'anic learning, prayer, memorization of short Qur'anic chapters, compliance with school regulations, queuing, and completing assigned tasks. These findings indicate that character formation occurred through direct educational activities as well as habituation and role modeling in everyday life.

The inhibiting factors included limited family time, parental work demands, technology exposure, peer and social-environmental influences, family economic conditions, parental educational background, and limited educator availability. Limited parental availability affected children's daily supervision, while television programs and digital games required additional parental attention. Peer relationships, the surrounding social environment, economic conditions, and limited parental educational knowledge were also identified as constraints in children's educational and developmental processes. Overall, character formation was manifested through role modeling, communication, habituation, guidance, discipline, affection, and religious values, supported by educators at school but constrained by limitations in parental time, technological supervision, environmental influences, socioeconomic conditions, parental educational background, and educator availability. The findings also indicated a tendency toward a democratic parenting pattern that encouraged openness, responsibility, and children's independence.





Picture 1. Thematic Pattern of Character Education through Parenting Practices

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that character formation is better understood as a continuous relational process than as the direct transmission of moral instructions. The central mechanism identified in this study was the repeated enactment of values through communication, explanation, role modeling, habituation, discipline, affection, and guided independence. Thus, the contribution of parenting was not limited to the adoption of a particular parenting style; rather, its significance emerged from how educational practices were consistently experienced by children in everyday family life and reinforced at school. A meta-analysis of 23 studies found a small but statistically significant positive association between authoritative parenting and children's moral reasoning (Pinquart & Fischer, 2022), whereas authoritarian parenting was associated in the opposite direction. The present findings extend this perspective by showing that the relevance of such parenting is not confined to children's cognitive understanding of



morality; it is also manifested through everyday practices such as respectful communication, discipline, responsibility, and behavioral regulation. At the same time, the findings provide a useful qualification to approaches that treat parenting style as a fixed category. What appears consequential in the present context is not simply the label attached to a parenting style, but the interactional mechanisms through which the style is enacted, particularly explanation, modeling, habituation, and guided autonomy. This distinction is important because similar parental control may produce different educational meanings depending on whether it is accompanied by dialogue and moral reasoning or imposed through coercion and restricted communication.

The religious dimension provides an important contextual contribution to the findings. Religious practices in this study were not limited to formal instruction but were incorporated into everyday routines, including prayer, Qur'anic learning, respectful language, and interpersonal conduct. This pattern is consistent with (Rich et al., 2024) who found that religious beliefs may influence parenting practices through communication, participation, and relational engagement, although religious expectations may also become restrictive when primarily used as mechanisms of control. In the present study, therefore, the educational significance of religious values lies not simply in their transmission but in their repeated enactment through parental modeling, habituation, and interaction. This finding supports the view that Islamic character education is strengthened when religious values become lived practices within children's everyday relationships. Conversely, the presence of highly controlling parenting practices suggests that religious or moral expectations cannot automatically be assumed to produce positive character outcomes. The educational quality of the relationship through which values are transmitted therefore becomes an essential consideration. From a theoretical perspective, the findings can also be interpreted through an ecological and relational understanding of character education, in which the family and school are treated as interconnected environments rather than independent sites of moral development





(Alamolhoda, 2023). Character formation was strengthened when similar expectations were encountered across home and school, while its continuity was potentially weakened by competing influences such as unregulated digital exposure, peer environments, and limited parental availability. This interpretation is supported by recent research emphasizing that parenting interventions and family-oriented educational approaches can influence both parenting practices and children's developmental outcomes. A 2024 systematic review and meta-analysis published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* (Al Sager et al., 2024) further demonstrated the importance of multidimensional interventions that address parenting practices and broader family conditions rather than treating child development as an isolated outcome. Thus, the contribution of the present study lies in positioning character formation as an ecologically distributed educational process, in which parental behavior, family routines, school practices, and the surrounding social environment are mutually implicated.

The Islamic educational perspective provides an additional dimension to this interpretation by positioning religious values as lived educational practices rather than merely curricular content. The integration of prayer, Qur'anic learning, moral language, respect, and habituation within everyday routines suggests that Islamic character education can be conceptualized as a process of internalization through example, repetition, interaction, and practice. This interpretation is compatible with recent scholarship showing that religious beliefs can function as resources for positive parent-child participation and communication, while their educational effects depend substantially on how they are incorporated into family relationships. The main contribution of this study lies in connecting parenting practices, Islamic value formation, and school reinforcement within a single process-oriented account. Rather than treating parenting style as a fixed category, the findings show how values are translated into children's everyday experiences through modeling, communication, habituation, discipline, affection, and religious practice. The continuity between family and school is particularly important because similar expectations across these environments provide repeated





opportunities for children to practice the same values. In this sense, parenting functions not merely as behavioral management but as a form of family-based Islamic character education in which religious and moral values are transformed into lived practices.

Practically, parents may therefore be positioned not merely as providers of discipline but as primary educational agents whose daily conduct constitutes a form of implicit curriculum (Rosignoli, 2025). Schools and early childhood Islamic education institutions may similarly strengthen character formation by developing parent school partnerships, establishing shared behavioral expectations, and providing parents with practical guidance on communication, habituation, digital supervision, and religiously grounded modeling. Such an approach is consistent with systematic evidence indicating that parental participation and family engagement can constitute important components of educational processes in religious-school contexts (Pusztai et al., 2024b). The findings further indicate that the continuity between home and school is important because values become more meaningful when children encounter compatible expectations across their everyday environments. Accordingly, character education may be strengthened when parents and educators coordinate practices related to religious habituation, communication, discipline, responsibility, and supervision of children's social and digital environments. This practical implication reinforces the study's central argument that parenting should be understood not merely as a behavioral management strategy but as an educational process through which Islamic and character values are continuously experienced and practiced.

Nevertheless, the qualitative and context-specific nature of this study limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other early childhood populations. The identified patterns should therefore be treated as contextual explanations rather than universal causal relationships. Future research should examine the continuity of parenting practices and character development through longitudinal designs, involve a broader range of families and





educational settings, and investigate how digital environments and peer relationships interact with religiously grounded parenting. Further comparative studies could also examine whether similar patterns emerge across different Islamic educational institutions, socioeconomic contexts, and cultural settings. Such research would allow the concept of parenting-based Islamic character education to be developed beyond descriptive accounts toward a more empirically testable framework explaining how values are translated into repeated practices, internalized by children, and sustained across developmental stages.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that early childhood character education is a continuous process shaped by parenting practices and reinforced by the school environment. Character develops through role modeling, communication, habituation, guidance, discipline, affection, and religious values. Democratic parenting supports children's independence and responsibility, although character formation remains challenged by limited family time, parental control, digital exposure, peers, and socioeconomic conditions. The study positions parenting as a central arena of Islamic character education and highlights the importance of consistent family school collaboration.

The study is limited by its qualitative, context-specific design at PAUD Janitra. Future research should use longitudinal and comparative approaches to examine digital environments, peer influence, parental education, and socioeconomic conditions in developing an integrated model of family-based Islamic character education.

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