

Model for Developing Children's Religious Character through Integration of Reciting the Koran and Commemorating Islamic Holidays

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a model for fostering children's religious character by integrating routine Qur'an recitation with the commemoration of Islamic holidays (PHBI) within a community service context through the Real Work College (KKN) program. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected over one month through observation, interviews, and documentation involving children, parents, and local religious leaders. The findings reveal notable improvements in children's abilities to read and memorize short surahs, perform daily prayers, maintain worship discipline, and internalize the moral virtues of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Maulid Nabi celebration, supported by parents and community leaders, strengthened communal bonds and provided positive role models, confirming that children's spiritual growth is significantly shaped by sociocultural environments. Challenges such as limited educational resources, varied skill levels, and time constraints highlight the need for creative learning materials, broader stakeholder involvement, and the use of digital tools in future programs. Overall, the integration of Qur'an recitation and Islamic holiday celebrations proves to be an effective strategy for instilling enduring religious values while enhancing children's moral character and social skills.

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Introduction

In recent decades, serious concerns have arisen regarding the decline of religiosity and morality among younger generations. Numerous cases indicate that children and adolescents tend to experience a "value conflict" between the religious knowledge they learn and their actual behavior in daily life (Ramadhan et al., 2025). For example, although students receive adequate religious lessons, deviant behaviors such as bullying, intolerance, and moral misconduct are still prevalent. This phenomenon shows that cognitive aspects alone (religious knowledge) are insufficient to form a strong religious character that is internalized in behavior.

Within schools and communities, concerns have also emerged about the weak implementation of Islamic values in children's daily practices. Some schools do organize religious activities, such as study circles (pengajian) or collective prayers, but these activities are often ceremonial and not consistently integrated into the curriculum and school culture (Aditya Dwi Lanza & Daniel Matin Nasrullah, 2025). For instance, in many educational institutions, Islamic holiday

commemoration activities (PHBI) are merely selective annual agendas that lack a systematic structure. As a result, children experience episodic religious engagement rather than structured and internalized practices, posing a significant challenge in building a mature and stable religious character.

Religious character in children is one aspect of personality that does not emerge automatically; it must be cultivated through habituation, role modeling, and environmental interaction (Jannah, 2019). Methods such as habitual prayers, Qur'an recitation, and regular religious activities are considered effective in fostering children's religiosity (Maulida et al., 2025). Research conducted at SDN 14 ATTS shows that stages of planning, implementing, and evaluating religious activities can encourage the internalization of religious values such as honesty, devotion in worship, and sincerity (Pranata et al., 2023).

The integration of religious values into character education has been widely discussed. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) shares common ground with character education, as both aim to instill moral and ethical values in daily life (Saleh & Haluti, 2025). Several studies have shown that integrating character education into PAI—whether in teaching materials, learning processes, or assessments—can strengthen the internalization of religious values (Indarti & Efendi, 2024; Nurjannah et al., 2020; Taulabi, 2017). This is further supported by research on character strengthening through religious education, which highlights the teacher's role in designing and implementing religious activities as part of the curriculum (Komariah et al., 2024).

Based on the literature review, several models for fostering religious character have been implemented, such as the PAI Mengajar program, which focuses on mentoring, guidance, and Qur'an teaching (Samsudin, 2024). This program successfully enhances students' commitment to worship, enthusiasm for Qur'an study, appreciation of religious symbols, and closeness to the Holy Book. However, this model is more intervention-based at the village level and has not systematically integrated PHBI into the religious curriculum. Other studies indicate that schools that routinely engage in religious activities, such as morning religious sessions, can increase students' spiritual and religious awareness (Hayati, 2024).

Thus, the research gap that emerges is the absence of a model that explicitly combines regular Qur'an recitation (*mengaji*) and PHBI activities within a structured, systematic, and sustainable framework for developing children's religious character. This study aims to formulate such an integrative model, test its impact on children's religious character, and identify factors influencing its success.

The purpose of this research is to formulate and evaluate a model for fostering children's religious character through the integration of routine Qur'an recitation and Islamic holiday commemorations (PHBI). The primary research question is: How can an integrative *mengaji* and PHBI model effectively shape children's religious character? Accordingly, this study seeks to address the issue that current religious character development tends to be poorly structured or separated between recitation activities and religious events, necessitating an innovative model that integrates both.

The basic assumption of this study is that children's religious character can be more effectively developed if religious activities are not only daily routines or isolated recitations but are also aligned with collective religious rituals such as

Islamic holiday celebrations. The research argument is that the combination of personal intimacy through *mengaji* and social context through PHBI will create a synergistic effect for deeper and more lasting internalization of religious character (as children experience both spiritual depth and social religious engagement). In practice, this model is expected to produce findings that children involved in both aspects show improvements in belief, consistency in worship, moral values, and religious social responsibility. The novelty of this research lies in the integrative model between *mengaji* and PHBI as an instrument for fostering children's religious character, which has been little studied, while also exploring the interaction between individual and collective religious practices as a foundation for a more comprehensive religious character.

Methods

This research was carried out within the framework of a Student Community Service Program (KKN) situated in a nearby area, concentrating on children as the main focus group. A qualitative descriptive framework was utilized to investigate the integration of Qur'an recitation sessions and Islamic festive observances as a model for enhancing religious character development. The research structure prioritized involvement from the community, including children, parents, and local religious authorities.

Data gathering took place through methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation throughout the program's execution. Observations aimed to record children's engagement and shifts in behavior, while discussions with parents and community representatives offered perspectives on how the activities were perceived to have an effect. Documentation, incorporating images and field notes, was employed to bolster the credibility of the findings. The program spanned one month, enabling researchers to track the reliability and results of the activities.

To guarantee the reliability of the data, triangulation was implemented by contrasting information derived from various sources and methods. The researchers, who also acted as facilitators throughout the KKN initiative, recognized their role within this participatory approach. This dual function allowed for direct interaction with children while thoughtfully assessing the effectiveness of the model. The methods were structured to yield rich, contextual insights that underscore the potential benefits of combining Qur'an recitation and Islamic holy day festivities in nurturing children's religious character.

Finding

The execution of Qur'an recitation events during the KKN initiative received favorable reactions from the local youth. Numerous children showed great eagerness in participating in the ongoing sessions, which led to a gradual enhancement in their ability to read and memorize brief surahs. Furthermore, the consistent schedule aided in cultivating discipline, as the children learned to adhere to timetables and exhibit respect in religious practices.

The observance of Islamic holy occasions, like the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Maulid Nabi), provided valuable experiences that merged education with enjoyment. Through narratives, collective prayers, and meaningful traditions, the children could link Islamic teachings with their everyday experiences. Involvement from parents and community members

further enriched these events by reinforcing ethical teachings within a nurturing social setting.

In summary, the incorporation of Qur'an recitation and celebrations of Islamic holy days significantly enhanced the children's religious values. Observations showed the emergence of constructive behaviors, such as reverence for elders, a readiness to assist fellow children, and regular engagement in basic religious activities. These results emphasize that community-driven and inclusive methods can effectively cultivate children's spiritual consciousness and instill positive practices in their daily lives.

Qur'an Recitation and Daily Prayers

Sessions for Qur'an recitation began with an introduction to the hijaiyah letters and progressed through Iqra levels 1 to 3, tailored to the individual learning capabilities of each child. The program regularly accommodated 10 to 25 children, all of whom demonstrated high levels of interest and motivation in their studies. Over the course of the program, approximately 85% of participants exhibited measurable improvement in their Qur'an reading skills, indicating the effectiveness of structured, incremental instruction. In addition to recitation, daily prayers—covering routines such as prayers before meals, sleep, and study—were integrated into the learning process through the use of songs and coordinated movements, which enhanced engagement and made the experience more interactive and enjoyable for the children.

This structured approach reflects the stages outlined by Susanti and Nurhayati, who emphasize that teaching the hijaiyah letters using the Iqro method involves careful planning, methodical implementation, and ongoing evaluation (Susanti & Nurhayati, 2022). The findings of the current program align with this framework, illustrating that a systematic progression from letter recognition to full Iqra levels, combined with engaging and interactive teaching techniques, can significantly support early literacy in Qur'an reading while simultaneously cultivating children's spiritual awareness and enthusiasm for learning. Moreover, the integration of movement and music in teaching daily prayers highlights the importance of multi-sensory learning strategies in sustaining attention, improving retention, and fostering a positive attitude toward religious education.

Table 1. Children's Attendance in Qur'an Recitation Sessions

Week	Number of Participants	Notes
1	10	Some children were still shy
2	18	Increased participation
3	21	More active engagement
4	25	Almost full attendance

Short Surah Memorization and Prophet's Morality

The program also emphasized the memorization of short surahs, including Al-Fatihah and An-Nas. Approximately 14 children actively participated in this activity, demonstrating significant improvements in both memorization accuracy and pronunciation fluency. In parallel, lessons on the virtuous attributes of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were delivered through storytelling and concrete, relatable examples. Sixteen children engaged attentively, and many began to exhibit a deeper understanding and application of positive traits such as honesty, patience, and compassion in their daily interactions.

These findings are consistent with the work of Susilowati et al. (2023), who argue that integrating Qur'anic instruction with moral storytelling effectively cultivates both cognitive and emotional aspects of children's religious identities. By combining memorization practice with value-based narratives, children not only acquire Qur'anic knowledge but also internalize ethical and spiritual principles, fostering holistic development in line with Islamic educational objectives. The active participation observed in both memorization and moral storytelling sessions underscores the importance of interactive and contextually meaningful pedagogical approaches in early religious education (Susilowati et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Children's Memorizing Short Surahs During Learning Sessions

Practical Worship Activities and Preparations

Practical sessions were conducted to teach children the correct procedures for performing ablution (wudhu), with 13 participants actively involved. This hands-on approach enabled the children to directly engage with the ritual, facilitating experiential learning and reinforcing proper ablution techniques. In addition, in preparation for the Maulid Nabi celebration, approximately 18 children participated in rehearsal sessions that included learning sholawat and qasidah. These rehearsals not only promoted teamwork and collaboration but also enhanced the children's self-confidence in performing publicly.

By incorporating both practical ritual instruction and performance-based activities, the program demonstrates the effectiveness of experiential learning in religious education. Engaging children in hands-on practices, such as wudhu, alongside collaborative cultural performances like sholawat and qasidah, supports both skill acquisition and social-emotional development. This approach aligns with pedagogical principles suggesting that active participation and collective experiences can strengthen both religious competencies and interpersonal skills among young learners.



Figure 2. Practical Worship Activity: Children Practicing Ablution (wudhu)

Maulid Nabi Celebration

The key event of the program was the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, which attracted 22 children along with their parents and local community leaders. Activities featured storytelling about the Prophet's life, group recitals of sholawat, and joining in communal prayers. This celebration fostered a joyous and significant atmosphere, reinforcing the principles imparted throughout the program while strengthening relationships among children, their families, and the broader community. This aligns with the perspective of Abo-Zena & Midgette (2019), who underline that religious ceremonies and community involvement enhance the social and spiritual growth of children within their cultural settings (Abo-Zena & Midgette, 2019).

Evaluation and Outcomes

The final gathering, attended by 20 children, centered on reflection and assessment of the various program activities. As tokens of appreciation for their participation, the children were given notebooks and stationery. The outcomes of the program revealed significant advancements across multiple domains: (1) improved Qur'an reading skills, (2) proficiency in daily prayers, (3) deeper understanding of the Prophet Muhammad's admirable character, (4) heightened motivation to learn about religious teachings, and (5) strengthened social connections among the participants.

These results are consistent with the findings of Fitriah et al. (2025), which suggest that religious character education in Indonesian schools contributes not only to cognitive development but also to behavioral and social growth, particularly when integrated with cultural and spiritual practices. The program demonstrates that combining structured learning, reflective activities, and culturally meaningful practices effectively supports the holistic development of children's religious knowledge, ethical values, and interpersonal skills. Moreover, the provision of tangible rewards, such as notebooks and stationery, appears to enhance engagement and reinforce positive learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of recognition and encouragement in early religious education (Fitriah et al., 2025).



Figure 3. Closing Session and Distribution of Learning Materials to Children's

Discussion

The results of this research suggest that combining Qur'an recitation with the celebration of Islamic holidays creates an impactful and significant framework for enhancing the religious character of children. Not only did children enhance their abilities in reading and memorizing surahs, but they also cultivated spiritual consciousness and routine practices that embody Islamic principles. This supports Diah and Anita's (2025) assertion that regular religious activities assist children

in internalizing ethical values from an early age. Additionally, the noticeable growth in enthusiasm and discipline indicates that character education is most effective when it merges organized learning with enjoyable and engaging experiences (Saputri & Afrianingsih, 2025).

Moreover, the celebration of Maulid Nabi was vital in fostering a sense of community identity and shared spiritual connection. The participation of parents and local leaders amplified the program's impact by offering children role models and social encouragement. This corresponds with Abo-Zena and Midgette's (2019) findings, which emphasize that the spiritual growth of children is deeply influenced by their sociocultural environments and communal activities. The cooperative aspect of these activities also echoes the work of Susilowati and others (2022), who observed that involvement from families and communities enhances the richness and durability of religious character education.

Despite the program's successful outcomes, issues such as insufficient educational resources, differing skill levels among the children, and limited time emerged as challenges. These difficulties underline the necessity for more creative learning materials and longer implementation timeframes in forthcoming programs. Fitriah and colleagues (2025) emphasize that ongoing support and the incorporation of religious activities in both educational and community environments are crucial for enduring character development. Consequently, this model could benefit from the engagement of additional stakeholders, a broader spectrum of religious practices, and the utilization of digital tools to enhance children's educational experience (Fitriah et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This research determines that incorporating Qur'an recitation along with the observance of Islamic holidays is a productive approach for cultivating the religious character of children within community environments. The initiative effectively improved children's skills in Qur'an reading, memorization of daily prayers and brief surahs, comprehension of the admirable qualities of the Prophet, and the development of positive traits such as discipline, respect, and teamwork. The engagement of parents and community leaders further amplified the results, fostering a supportive atmosphere conducive to ongoing character development. In application, this model can serve as a community-oriented approach that enhances formal education, guaranteeing that children benefit from both organized instruction and practical reinforcement of Islamic principles. Future investigations are suggested to broaden the range of activities, implement creative learning tools, and assess the enduring effects of such initiatives on the ethical and spiritual development of children.

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