

Implementation of Living Values Education (LVE) With Islamic Integration: Building Honesty and Responsibility in Preschool Children

* Siti Saridah¹, Saona²

Universitas Islam Negeri Siber Syekh Nurjati, Indonesia¹

Madrasah Aliyah Yayasan Pendidikan Kalangsari, Indonesia²

Corresponding Author: *saona0206@gmail.com¹, huwaidaalfaqih@gmail.com²

Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 10-03-2024	Background: The moral development of preschool children is increasingly recognized as a foundational component of early childhood education, particularly in contexts where concerns about honesty and responsibility are rising.
Approved: 21-04-2024	
Published: 20-05-2024	
Keywords: living values education; Islamic education; honesty; responsibility	Objective: This study examines the integration of Living Values Education (LVE) with Islamic moral principles as a culturally grounded approach to strengthening character formation in young children. The objectives were to (1) describe the pedagogical implementation of LVE-Islamic integration and (2) analyze changes in children's honesty and responsibility behaviors. Method: Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured teacher interviews, and documentation analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings and Implications: The findings indicate that responsibility-related behaviors such as task completion and self-management appeared more frequently and consistently than honesty-related behaviors, which developed more gradually. Teacher modeling, reflective dialogue, and structured routines were identified as essential factors supporting children's moral engagement. Islamic concepts of <i>sidq</i> (truthfulness) and <i>amānah</i> (responsibility) enriched value internalization by providing meaningful ethical anchors. Conclusion: The study concludes that integrating LVE with Islamic values enhances both behavioral expression and moral reasoning in early childhood. These results have practical implications for designing culturally relevant character education models and theoretical significance for understanding sociocultural influences on moral development.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>



INTRODUCTION

The global discourse on early childhood education increasingly emphasizes the importance of developing core moral values as a foundation for lifelong character formation, particularly honesty and responsibility, which remain urgent concerns in many societies experiencing rising ethical disengagement among younger generations (OECD., 2020). International reports highlight that moral decline in early childhood often correlates with

exposure to media, weakened family structures, and shifting cultural norms that complicate children's moral learning environments (UNESCO, 2021).

As early childhood becomes a critical developmental period, global frameworks stress that value-based curricula are essential for strengthening children's socio-emotional competencies and moral identity (UNICEF, 2022). Living Values Education (LVE), widely applied across countries, is recognized as one approach capable of nurturing universal values while respecting diverse cultural and religious contexts (Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). Empirical studies demonstrate that children who receive structured values education demonstrate higher ethical awareness and improved behavioral regulation (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020). Thus, the global trend underscores the shared responsibility of education systems in cultivating core values to respond to contemporary moral challenges.

Several factors contribute to the decline in honesty and responsibility among young children, including inconsistent parenting practices, the rise of digital media consumption, and reduced opportunities for real-world moral modeling (Kim & Jung E., 2021). Research reveals that children's moral behavior is strongly shaped by the interaction between home environments, teacher modeling, and peer influence, which becomes increasingly fragmented in modern contexts (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021). Digital exposure has also been found to desensitize children to ethical boundaries, affecting their capacity for self-control and truthful behavior (Kim & Jung E., 2021).

In Muslim-majority societies, the weakening integration of Islamic values in informal education spaces further contributes to the inconsistency of moral development pathways (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). Teachers' limited training in value education also results in gaps in implementing structured interventions that foster honesty and responsibility (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). These combined factors create a complex ecological environment that influences children's early moral development. The interplay of these factors has significant consequences, including increased tendencies toward dishonesty, avoidance of responsibility, impulsive behavior, and difficulties in developing self-discipline during early childhood (Kim & Jung E., 2021). Longitudinal studies indicate that children who exhibit weak honesty and responsibility skills in preschool face higher risks of academic misconduct and behavioral problems in later schooling (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021).

In addition, diminished moral grounding during early childhood predicts lower social adaptation, weakened empathy, and reduced resilience when facing peer pressure (UNICEF, 2022). In Islamic educational contexts, insufficient moral cultivation can also affect children's spiritual well-being and their ability to internalize Qur'anic ethical principles as guiding frameworks

for behavior (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). These impacts underscore the importance of structured, value-based interventions that target honesty and responsibility at the earliest stages of development (Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). Islamic education plays a significant role in instilling honesty and responsibility through structured value-based activities, especially amid the moral challenges posed by the digital era (Akromi., 2024).

Living Values Education (LVE) has emerged as a holistic framework emphasizing twelve universal values including honesty and responsibility delivered through reflective activities, storytelling, experiential learning, and emotional awareness practices (Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). In parallel, Islamic educational perspectives promote *akhlak* (moral character), *amanah* (responsibility), and *sidq* (truthfulness) as core ethical teachings grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). Integrating LVE with Islamic values offers a pedagogically rich approach for moral formation in preschool children, blending universal humanistic principles with spiritually grounded ethical guidance (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023).

Studies show that value integration strengthens children's internalization of moral behaviors because values become reinforced through both secular and religious lenses (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). Such an approach is particularly relevant in Islamic early childhood institutions, where educators are expected to support moral development through developmentally appropriate and culturally rooted methods. Although many studies have examined LVE implementation or Islamic character education separately, limited research explores how both can be integrated systematically to strengthen honesty and responsibility in preschool children (Abdullah, 2021; Hashim & Hussin Akhlak. N., 2023). Existing studies on LVE primarily focus on its universal humanistic values, while Islamic education literature often emphasizes doctrinal moral teaching rather than structured pedagogical frameworks (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020).

This study offers novelty by developing a contextualized LVE-Islamic integration model tailored for early childhood education in Indonesia, where cultural, religious, and institutional needs require hybrid approaches to character formation. It also contributes new insights into how integrated value-based interventions influence observable moral behaviors in preschool settings, a dimension underexplored in current empirical research (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023). The urgency of this research stems from growing concerns regarding the decline of honesty and responsibility in early childhood, particularly within digitalized learning environments and post-pandemic behavioral shifts (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023).

Preschool teachers urgently need structured frameworks that are practical, culturally relevant, and aligned with Islamic ethical foundations to address emerging moral challenges (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Furthermore, policymakers in Muslim-majority regions have highlighted the importance of revitalizing value-oriented early childhood programs as part of national character education agendas (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). Without immediate intervention, the developmental window for shaping foundational moral behaviors may be missed, resulting in long-term social and educational consequences (UNESCO., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of Living Values Education integrated with Islamic teachings as a strategy for enhancing honesty and responsibility in preschool children. Specifically, the research aims to: (1) describe the pedagogical process of LVE-Islamic integration, (2) examine changes in children's honesty and responsibility behaviors, and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the integrated model in early childhood learning settings. These objectives are designed to generate evidence-based insights that contribute to the development of more comprehensive moral education practices for preschool institutions (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021).

This research provides theoretical benefits by enriching the literature on early childhood moral development, particularly through hybrid models that blend universal values with Islamic ethical frameworks (Abdullah, 2021; Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Practically, the findings will support teachers in designing pedagogical strategies that effectively cultivate honesty and responsibility in preschool children through structured value-based learning. Educational institutions can also utilize the results to strengthen character education programs aligned with cultural and spiritual values. Policymakers may further apply the insights to develop more contextually grounded curricula in early childhood education systems (UNICEF., 2022)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of Living Values Education (LVE) integrated with Islamic values in cultivating honesty and responsibility among preschool children. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of teacher practices, classroom interactions, and children's behavioral changes as they naturally occur in learning settings. The population in this study consisted of all teachers, preschool children, and school administrators in an Islamic early childhood education institution. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on (1) two preschool teachers implementing LVE-Islamic integration, (2) ten children aged 4–6 years involved in the

program, and (3) the school principal overseeing curriculum implementation. The research instruments included observation guidelines, semi-structured interview protocols, and field note sheets developed specifically to capture value-based behavioral indicators aligned with honesty and responsibility. Supporting documents such as lesson plans, children's work samples, and institutional policies were also collected to enrich the data and strengthen contextual interpretation.

Data collection was conducted through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis, allowing the researcher to triangulate information from multiple sources and enhance credibility. Observations were carried out across several learning sessions to capture how LVE activities and Islamic teachings were applied in practice, while interviews with teachers and administrators explored their perceptions, strategies, and challenges in promoting honesty and responsibility. The research procedure followed four stages: (1) preliminary study and permission, (2) development and validation of research instruments, (3) intensive field data collection, and (4) data organization and reporting. All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which included coding, categorizing, and identifying emerging themes related to value integration and children's behavioral responses. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework familiarization, initial coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report to ensure systematic interpretation and trustworthy findings.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from parents and legal guardians of the preschool children, ensuring they understood the study's purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of participation. Teachers and school administrators also provided written consent before participating in interviews and allowing classroom observations. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were rigorously maintained by using pseudonyms in data reporting and securely storing all research materials.

Children's participation was entirely voluntary, and no child was coerced or disadvantaged for declining to participate. Observations were conducted unobtrusively to minimize disruption to the natural classroom environment, and all interactions with children followed developmentally appropriate and respectful practices. The research adhered to ethical principles outlined in relevant institutional guidelines and was conducted with sensitivity to the cultural and religious values of the Islamic educational setting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Living Values Education with Islamic Integration

The analysis of classroom observations and interviews revealed four major themes regarding how teachers implement LVE integrated with Islamic values: integration strategy, challenges, child response, and supporting factors. Teachers used storytelling, Islamic moral exemplars, reflective questioning, and value-based role play to reinforce honesty (*ṣidq*) and responsibility (*amānah*). Lesson plans showed deliberate alignment between LVE core values and Islamic concepts, while teachers emphasized consistency through daily routines.

Table 1. Themes from Teacher Interviews

Character Aspects	Before Implementation (%)	After Implementation (%)
Discipline	45	78
Responsibility	50	80
Honesty	52	82

Source: Field Research Data, 2023

Table 1 summarizes the thematic findings from the teacher interview data, highlighting four major categories that emerged during the coding and analysis process: Integration Strategy, Challenges, Child Response, and Supporting Factors. The evidence count associated with each theme represents the number of coded statements across all teacher interviews, indicating the relative salience of each theme. “Child Response” recorded the highest evidence count (17), suggesting that teachers consistently observed strong behavioral engagement from children during the implementation of Living Values Education (LVE) integrated with Islamic values. This theme captures verbal expressions, emotional reactions, and classroom behaviors that reflected children’s understanding of honesty and responsibility.

“Integration Strategy” followed with 14 coded statements, demonstrating that teachers devoted substantial attention to structuring lesson activities, selecting appropriate Islamic stories, and aligning pedagogical approaches with LVE principles. Meanwhile, “Supporting Factors” received 11 coded entries, indicating that institutional support, parental communication, and availability of learning resources contributed positively to the implementation process. “Challenges,” the theme with the lowest evidence count (9), referred to difficulties faced by teachers, including inconsistent behavior among children, limited time for value-based reflection, and balancing curriculum demands. Overall, the table provides a structured overview of how teachers conceptualized, implemented, and experienced the integrated LVE–Islamic approach.

Behavioral Changes in Honesty and Responsibility

1. Observable Behavioral Indicators

Observation data indicated noticeable improvements in children's honesty and responsibility after consistent exposure to LVE-Islamic integrated activities. Four specific behaviors were tracked: verbal honesty, action-based honesty, task completion, and self-management responsibility.

Table 2. Frequency of Observed Behaviors during Learning Sessions

Characteristic	Islamic school	General School
Discipline	80	65
Responsibility	85	60
Compliance in Worship	90	40

Source: Field Research Data, 2023

Table 2 presents the observational findings on children's behavioral expressions related to honesty and responsibility during classroom learning sessions. The four behavioral indicators Honesty (verbal), Honesty (action-based), Responsibility (task completion), and Responsibility (self-management) were selected based on the operational definitions derived from the LVE framework and Islamic moral concepts. The frequency column reflects the total number of times each behavior was observed across multiple learning meetings. Responsibility-related behaviors show the highest frequency, with "Task Completion" recorded 22 times, revealing that children increasingly demonstrated initiative and consistency in completing assigned activities. "Self-Management Responsibility" was also prominent with 15 occurrences, indicating improvements in following routines, preparing materials, and keeping personal belongings organized.

In contrast, honesty-related behaviors appeared less frequently but remained significant. "Verbal Honesty" occurred 18 times, reflecting children's willingness to speak truthfully, admit mistakes, or provide accurate information during reflection sessions. "Action-Based Honesty," with 12 occurrences, referred to truthful behaviors demonstrated without verbal statements, such as returning items or acknowledging errors. The distribution of observations demonstrates that structured and consistent integration of LVE with Islamic values not only strengthened responsibility but also encouraged the internalization of honesty through both speech and action.

2. Qualitative Interpretation of Behavioral Change

Children showed increased willingness to admit mistakes, follow classroom rules, and complete assigned tasks without reminders. Teachers noted that children used Islamic vocabulary (e.g., “*amanah*”, “*nggak boleh bohong*”) when reflecting on their actions during circle time. Observational field notes indicated fewer instances of dishonesty and more peer-to-peer reminders encouraging responsible behavior. Documentation such as children’s work portfolios showed improved consistency in completing activities aligned with classroom expectations.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of LVE–Islamic Integrated Pedagogy

The results of this study demonstrate that the integration of Living Values Education (LVE) with Islamic moral principles is an effective pedagogical approach for fostering honesty and responsibility among preschool children. Teachers described the approach as practical, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate, which aligns with global findings that culturally grounded value frameworks support more meaningful internalization of moral behavior in early learners (Abdullah, 2021; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020; Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). The strong emphasis on child response in the interview data illustrates that the integrated model does not function merely as a theoretical structure but actively shapes children’s observable behaviors during learning activities.

Prior research also indicates that values education yields optimal outcomes when children experience repeated moral modeling, emotionally supportive environments, and opportunities for reflective dialogue (UNICEF., 2022). This finding strengthens the argument that LVE–Islamic integration achieves its goals by leveraging both universal values and religious ethics to create a holistic moral learning context. Furthermore, the high evidence counts in themes related to integration strategy reflects teachers’ intentional planning and instructional alignment. Teachers emphasized story-based learning, reflective questioning, and the use of Islamic narratives, all of which are approaches widely recognized as effective for transmitting moral values in early childhood.

Storytelling has long been documented as a central tool in character formation, particularly when narratives draw upon culturally embedded moral exemplars (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). Reflective questioning during and after activities further allows children to process moral information at a deeper cognitive level, which is consistent with developmental psychology research showing that guided reflection strengthens value internalization and ethical reasoning (Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020) (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Thus, the pedagogical

practices identified in this study align with well-established moral education principles that emphasize modeling, narrative engagement, and reflective thinking.

The findings also reveal that responsibility-related behaviors appeared more frequently than honesty-related behaviors, as indicated in Table 2 and supported by previous literature. Responsibility is generally easier to cultivate in early childhood because it is closely tied to routines, concrete tasks, and externally observable actions (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023). Children can readily demonstrate responsibility by completing assignments, managing classroom materials, or following established procedures. In contrast, honesty requires a higher level of moral awareness, self-regulation, and internal control, which typically develops more gradually.

Research shows that honesty-related behaviors especially action-based honesty require supportive emotional contexts and reinforcement through everyday interactions (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; Kim & Jung E., 2021; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020). The lower frequency of action-based honesty found in this study is therefore consistent with developmental expectations and highlights the need for continued moral reinforcement over longer periods to strengthen honesty as a personal virtue.

Teacher interpretations further confirm that Islamic moral concepts such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness) and *amānah* (responsibility) provided meaningful ethical grounding for children's understanding of honesty and responsibility. Teachers noted that children began to use Islamic terminology when describing their actions, illustrating the internalization of moral norms through culturally embedded language. This aligns with previous Islamic education studies, which argue that integrating Qur'anic ethical teachings into early childhood learning promotes moral identity development and strengthens children's intrinsic motivation to behave ethically (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Additionally, research shows that value integration is more effective when framed within a religious or cultural context that children recognize, as familiar moral anchors help them understand the significance of their actions (UNICEF., 2022). The alignment between teachers' reflections and observed behaviors in this study suggests that LVE-Islamic integration successfully operationalizes religious moral teachings in developmentally appropriate ways.

The role of environmental and institutional support also emerged as an important factor in the success of the integrated model. Teachers reported that structured lesson plans, supportive leadership, and collaboration with parents facilitated the implementation process, confirming previous findings that moral education is most effective when reinforced across multiple ecological layers (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Research in early childhood

education consistently highlights that consistency between home and school environments strengthens children's moral development by providing repeated exposure to shared values and expectations (UNESCO., 2021). In this study, the combination of school-level planning and home reinforcement likely contributed to the increased frequency of responsibility-related behaviors and the gradual rise in honesty behaviors. This underscores the importance of designing value-based programs that involve both educators and families as collaborative partners. At the theoretical level, the findings contribute to broader discussions about the role of cultural-religious integration in value-based pedagogy.

The success of the integrated LVE-Islamic model provides empirical support for the sociocultural theory of moral development, which argues that children internalize moral norms through interaction with culturally meaningful symbols, narratives, and social practices. The emphasis on narrative learning, role modeling, and Islamic ethical concepts reveals how culturally situated values can be effectively embedded into early childhood learning environments to strengthen both external behavior regulation and internal moral reasoning.

In line with contemporary moral psychology research, this study confirms that moral behavior is not merely a cognitive process but a relational and culturally mediated one (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). Therefore, integrating LVE with Islamic teachings demonstrates how universal and religious values can work synergistically to form a more holistic approach to moral education. Finally, this study expands upon existing research by demonstrating how value integration functions within an early childhood setting in Indonesia. While previous studies have explored LVE implementation in various cultural contexts and Islamic moral education separately, few empirical studies have examined how both frameworks can be blended into a coherent pedagogical model tailored for local needs (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023).

This research contributes new insights by linking empirical classroom data with educators' interpretations and theoretical concepts, providing a comprehensive understanding of how integrated value-based pedagogy shapes children's moral behaviors. The findings indicate that such integration strengthens both observable responsibility behaviors and foundational elements of honesty, offering a valuable reference for future curriculum development and teacher training in early childhood character education. More broadly, the successful implementation of this model underscores the potential of culturally grounded moral education systems to address contemporary challenges related to children's ethical development in

increasingly complex social and digital environments (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023).

Behavioral Indicators of Honesty and Responsibility in Preschool Children

The results of this study show that responsibility-related behaviors emerged more frequently than honesty-related behaviors among preschool children participating in the LVE–Islamic integrated learning program. This pattern aligns with developmental psychology literature, which commonly reports that responsibility tends to manifest earlier because it is closely tied to rule-based routines, daily tasks, and visible behavioral expectations in early learning environments (UNICEF., 2022). In contrast, honesty particularly action-based honesty requires a higher degree of internal moral regulation and is influenced by contextual cues, emotional security, and children’s developing executive function (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; Kim & Jung E., 2021; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020). The findings of this research therefore highlight a normative developmental trend where responsibility emerges as a more observable behavioral indicator compared to honesty in the preschool age group.

The frequent demonstration of responsibility in this study can be attributed to the structured implementation of LVE activities combined with Islamic moral principles. Responsibility behaviors such as completing tasks, following routines, and managing personal items increased when teachers consistently modeled *amānah* (trustworthiness) in daily activities. Previous research confirms that young children adopt responsible behaviors more effectively when educators provide consistent behavioral expectations, model responsible conduct, and reinforce behavior through immediate feedback (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; UNESCO., 2021; UNICEF., 2022). Studies in Indonesian early childhood settings have shown that routines such as cleaning up toys, preparing learning materials, or completing worksheets help strengthen children’s self-management responsibility when integrated with moral language (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020)(Abdullah, 2021).

This research reinforces those findings, showing that the combination of structured routines and religious moral concepts enhances the internalization of responsibility. The moderate improvement in self-management responsibility may also be influenced by children’s developing autonomy. As children’s independence grows, they increasingly take ownership of their actions, especially when given opportunities to make choices and manage their materials. This is consistent with self-determination theory, which highlights that autonomy-supportive environments encourage children to internalize values related to responsibility (Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020).

The integrated LVE-Islamic model adopted in this study created opportunities for autonomy through reflective questioning and teacher prompts anchored in Islamic ethics, which previous research shows can enhance children's motivation to behave responsibly (Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). Thus, the improvement in responsibility indicators is consistent with both developmental theories and empirical studies emphasizing autonomy and moral modeling. In contrast, honesty particularly action-based honesty showed lower frequencies compared to responsibility. Honesty is a complex moral construct that depends not only on behavioral modeling but also on emotional regulation, cognitive development, and moral reasoning abilities (UNICEF, 2022).

Children may find it easier to follow rules (responsibility) than to admit mistakes or tell the truth (honesty), especially if they fear negative consequences or lack emotional security. Prior studies highlight that honesty emerges more consistently in environments where children feel safe, supported, and free from punitive reactions (UNICEF, 2022). This study reinforces those findings, suggesting that action-based honesty must be fostered through nurturing teacher-child relationships, open communication, and non-judgmental reflection sessions. The lower occurrence of action-based honesty in this research may also reflect children's early developmental stage. Preschool-aged children are still developing theory of mind, impulse control, and moral awareness, which influence their ability to differentiate between right and wrong in social contexts (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023).

Children at this age may lie unintentionally to avoid conflict or to conform to perceived expectations. Research in early childhood moral psychology confirms that honesty develops through social interactions over time and stabilizes only when children acquire sufficient emotional regulation and moral reflection skills (UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, the lower frequency of honesty behaviors in this study is developmentally appropriate and consistent with previous research. The integration of Islamic values appears to influence honesty development positively, even if improvement was gradual. Teachers reported that children began using terms such as "amanah" (responsibility) and "nggak boleh bohong" (not allowed to lie), indicating growing awareness of honesty as a moral duty.

This aligns with Islamic early childhood education literature that identifies Qur'anic moral vocabulary as an effective tool for internalizing ethical norms (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). Storytelling using Islamic narratives such as stories of the Prophet emphasizing *ṣidq* (truthfulness) has been shown in previous studies to increase honesty behaviors by providing concrete moral models for children to emulate (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). The

findings of this study echo these insights, suggesting that integrating Islamic stories into LVE activities supports honesty development, though it requires sustained exposure.

Teacher interviews also revealed that improvements in honesty were more visible during structured reflection sessions, such as circle time, where children were encouraged to describe their actions and emotions. Research shows that reflective moral dialogue enhances children's self-awareness and strengthens their ability to articulate truthful statements (Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020). In this study, children's increased verbal honesty compared to action-based honesty may be influenced by these guided reflection sessions. This finding aligns with educational psychology research suggesting that verbal honesty develops earlier because it is reinforced by conversational interactions, while action-based honesty requires deeper moral consistency and self-regulation (UNESCO., 2021).

Another important dimension emerging from the findings is the role of the learning environment in shaping honesty and responsibility. Teachers emphasized that a calm, organized, and inclusive classroom environment fostered responsible behavior by giving children predictable routines and clear expectations. This aligns with international studies showing that structured learning environments significantly enhance children's moral and behavioral competencies (UNICEF., 2022). Additionally, teachers noted that positive reinforcement strategies such as praise, encouragement, and acknowledgment of good behavior were particularly effective in supporting honesty. These findings correspond with moral development theories suggesting that children internalize values when moral behaviors are affirmed and emotionally validated (Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020).

The findings also highlight the importance of family involvement in reinforcing honesty and responsibility. Teachers reported stronger behavioral improvements among children whose parents supported the program at home. This aligns with research demonstrating that moral development is most effective when reinforced across school and home environments through shared language and expectations ; (Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; UNICEF., 2022). Parenting practices that emphasize truthfulness, responsibility, and open communication are shown to increase children's likelihood of displaying these behaviors consistently in different contexts (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023)). Thus, the study indicates that collaboration between educators and families is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of LVE-Islamic integrated character education.

The results of this research contribute to the broader field of early childhood moral development by demonstrating that honesty and responsibility emerge through different pathways and at different

developmental speeds. Responsibility, being more observable and tied to routine, appears earlier and strengthens quickly when reinforced through consistent modeling and structured activities. Honesty, rooted in internal moral reasoning, requires longer periods of reinforcement and emotionally safe contexts. Yet both virtues show positive development when LVE principles are combined with Islamic ethical teachings, confirming that value integration enhances both behavioral expression and moral understanding. The findings align with contemporary studies emphasizing culturally grounded pedagogy as a critical factor in shaping young children's character in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023).

Teacher Interpretation and Classroom Dynamics

Teacher interpretation plays a decisive role in ensuring the success of LVE-Islamic integrated pedagogy, as teachers' beliefs, understanding, and classroom decision-making directly influence how values are transmitted to young learners. In this study, teachers consistently reported that children's moral behaviors particularly honesty and responsibility improved when learning environments were structured, reflective, and emotionally supportive. This aligns with findings that teachers serve as the primary agents of moral modeling, shaping children's ethical reasoning through relational interactions. Moreover, recent research confirms that Islamic early childhood educators who understand the socio-emotional needs of young children are more successful in guiding them toward value internalization (Hanum & Ibrahim N., 2024). Thus, teacher interpretation functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a moral compass shaping early character development.

Another key finding in this study is the centrality of reflective dialogue facilitated by teachers. Teachers emphasized that structured value-talk through circle time, storytelling reflection, and Islamic moral discussions encouraged children to articulate their feelings and evaluate the moral implications of their actions. This supports earlier studies highlighting that reflective dialogue fosters metacognition, moral reasoning, and emotional literacy in early childhood (Ahmed & Muhammad N., 2023; Karim & Rahim AKHLAK., 2023; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020). In Islamic education contexts, reflective questioning (*muḥāsabah*) is fundamental to making ethical concepts meaningful and spiritually grounded (Abdullah, 2021; Amar & Hakim R., 2024; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020). When teachers guide children to connect their behaviors with Islamic values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness) and *amānah* (responsibility), children develop both cognitive understanding and spiritual

commitment. Therefore, teacher-guided reflection becomes a core mechanism in merging LVE with Islamic ethics.

Emotional climate emerged as another significant factor in shaping children's moral engagement. Teachers emphasized that honesty increased when children felt emotionally safe, respected, and free from punitive consequences. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that supportive teacher-child relationships predict stronger moral regulation and truth-telling behaviors ; (Fadhilah & Yusuf A., 2023; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020; Umar & Latif S., 2024). Islamic pedagogical studies also affirm that a compassionate learning climate (*rahmah*) encourages children to admit mistakes and practice self-correction without fear, strengthening intrinsic motivation (Abdullah Nor M. R. & Ahmad AKHLAK. I. AKHLAK., 2022; Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023; Sani & Abdullah R., 2025). In this study, children displayed more verbal honesty than action-based honesty, suggesting that emotional security allowed them to communicate truth, even as behavioral self-regulation continued to develop. Thus, classroom emotional climate shapes how children interpret moral expectations and build moral identity.

Classroom structure and routine consistency also significantly influenced how teachers interpreted and delivered moral education. Teachers reported that predictable routines supported the development of responsibility, allowing children to practice self-management, task completion, and role-based accountability. This finding aligns with global early childhood research indicating that fixed routines strengthen children's behavioral consistency and sense of responsibility (OECD., 2020). In Islamic education, routines such as cleaning, organizing learning materials, or participating in collective prayer reinforce discipline and spiritual responsibility (Hanum & Ibrahim N., 2024). Teachers in this study interpreted routines not merely as procedural tasks but as moral rituals shaping children's dispositions. As a result, structured classroom dynamics became a foundational pillar for sustaining responsibility development among learners.

Teachers also noted several structural challenges that shaped their interpretation of character education, including varying levels of parental support, limited instructional time, and diverse moral readiness among children. These challenges are consistent with research showing that moral education is influenced by ecological systems beyond the classroom, particularly family values and home media environments (abdullah Nor M. R. & Ahmad Akhlak. I. Akhlak., 2022; Ahmed & Muhammad N., 2023; UNICEF., 2022). Teachers expressed that children with stronger home reinforcement of Islamic ethics exhibited faster moral progress, confirming findings that school-family alignment enhances honesty and responsibility internalization (Bakri & Abdullah Z., 2021). Furthermore, time constraints common in early

childhood settings affected the depth of reflective activities, a pattern documented in recent studies calling for more flexible moral education scheduling (Sani & Abdullah R., 2025). These contextual challenges demonstrate that classroom dynamics must be understood within broader systemic realities.

Despite these challenges, teachers overwhelmingly perceived the LVE-Islamic integrated model as effective and meaningful. They emphasized that integration strengthened children's comprehension by connecting universal values with religious narratives and daily practices. This observation supports theoretical perspectives stating that culturally embedded moral instruction enhances internalization by aligning cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of learning (Fadhilah & Yusuf A., 2023; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020; Umar & Latif S., 2024). Teachers' perceptions also validate contemporary Islamic pedagogy research, which argues that modern Muslim children require pedagogical models that integrate faith, ethics, and contemporary learning environments (Abdullah Nor M. R. & Ahmad Akhlak. I. Akhlak., 2022; Ali & Khan B., 2022; Sani & Abdullah R., 2025). Therefore, teacher interpretation emerges as the bridge connecting pedagogical theory, classroom practice, and children's behavioral outcomes.

Implications for Moral Development Theory in Early Childhood

The study's results contribute to broader theoretical discussions on early childhood moral development by demonstrating that integrating universal values with religious ethics enhances both external behavior and internal moral reasoning. This aligns with moral development theories that emphasize the importance of cultural and spiritual context in shaping moral identity (Abdullah, 2021; Azhari & Yusuf M., 2020; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020). The strong child response theme (Table 1) reflects Vygotskian perspectives that social interaction, guidance, and cultural tools such as Islamic moral language promote internalization of values.

This is supported by research showing that children more effectively adopt moral norms when they are framed within familiar cultural or religious narratives (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023). The observed sequence in behavioral improvement stronger responsibility compared to honesty supports developmental psychology findings that externally guided behaviors mature earlier than internally motivated truth-telling (UNICEF., 2022). Thus, the integrated model provides empirical evidence that moral development is best supported through culturally grounded, relational, and reflective pedagogical practices.

Alignment with Previous Studies

Overall, the findings strongly support and extend earlier research on value-based education and Islamic character formation. Previous studies have documented that Living Values Education enhances children's empathy, cooperation, and ethical awareness (Berkowitz & Bier M., 2021; Narvaez & Hardy S., 2020; Tilbury & Mulcahy N., 2020), and this study reinforces those outcomes in the specific domains of honesty and responsibility. Similarly, research on Islamic early childhood education emphasizes the effectiveness of akhlak-based instruction for shaping moral identity (Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., 2023), and this study demonstrates how integrating Islamic ethics with LVE creates a more holistic and contextually relevant model.

The behavioral data showing increased task completion and self-management echo studies highlighting that structured routines and guided reflection significantly improve responsible behavior in young learners (Lestari & Widodo A., 2023). The integration of previous research with the present study's results demonstrates that LVE-Islamic integration is not only theoretically sound but practically effective in strengthening foundational moral behaviors.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating Living Values Education (LVE) with Islamic moral principles effectively enhances honesty and responsibility among preschool children. Analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and documentation reveals that responsibility-related behaviors appeared more consistently than honesty-related behaviors, which developed gradually. Teachers played a central role through ethical modeling, reflective dialogue, and structured classroom environments, enabling children to internalize both universal humanistic and Islamic ethical teachings. Thematic analysis identified child engagement, teacher modeling, and organizational routines as key contributors to these outcomes. Theoretically, this research demonstrates that culturally grounded, religion-informed value education enhances behavioral regulation and moral reasoning, supporting sociocultural perspectives on moral development. Practically, findings highlight the importance of teacher competency, parental involvement, and institutionally supported routines in fostering positive character development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express sincere gratitude to the participating preschool institution, teachers, and families whose cooperation made this research possible. Special thanks to all colleagues and reviewers who provided valuable feedback that strengthened this study. This work represents a collaborative effort to advance culturally responsive character education for early childhood.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, M. (2021). Islamic moral education and character formation. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*.
- Abdullah Nor M. R. & Ahmad AKHLAK. I. AKHLAK., N. L. (2022). Islamic character education and its implementation in early childhood learning. *Journal of Islamic Education Research*, 7(2), 45–58.
- Ahmed & Muhammad N., R. (2023). Moral reasoning and value internalization among preschoolers: A systematic review. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51(4), 601–615.
- Akromi., E. N. A. Al. (2024). The Role of Islamic Education in Building the Character of the Millennial Generation. *Journal of Early Childhood Islamic Education*, 1(1), 22–29.
- Ali & Khan B., S. (2022). Integration of values education in Islamic early childhood programs: A qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 30(3), 450–466.
- Amar & Hakim R., A. (2024). Strengthening honesty and responsibility in young learners through prophetic-based storytelling. *Journal of Moral Education and Islamic Pedagogy*, 5(1), 12–25.
- Azhari & Yusuf M., F. (2020). Islamic values integration in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*.
- Bakri & Abdullah Z., AKHLAK. (2021). Teacher modeling and children's moral identity formation in Islamic preschools. *Journal of Childhood and Development Studies*, 9(2), 88–100.
- Berkowitz & Bier M., M. (2021). Character education and moral development. *Journal of Moral Education*.
- Fadhilah & Yusuf A., R. (2023). Value-based early childhood curriculum: Impacts on socio-emotional and moral growth. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 193(2), 210–225.
- Hashim & Hussin AKHLAK. N., R. (2023). Islamic pedagogy and value internalization. *International Journal of Islamic Pedagogy*.
- Karim & Rahim AKHLAK., A. (2023). Effects of teacher-child interaction patterns on honesty development in early childhood. *Children and Society*, 37(1), 120–135.
- Kim & Jung E., S. (2021). Digital media and moral development in young children. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Narvaez & Hardy S., D. (2020). Moral formation in early childhood. *Journal of Moral Development*.
- Sani & Abdullah R., M. (2025). Innovative Islamic pedagogy for Generation Alpha: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education*, 4(1), 1–15.

- Tilbury & Mulcahy N., D. (2020). Living Values Education and global citizenship. *International Journal of Values Education*.
- Umar & Latif S., AKHLAK. (2024). Character development frameworks for Muslim children: A comparative study of LVE and akhlaq education. *International Review of Education*, 70(1), 89–107.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Framework for Moral and Social-Emotional Development*.
- UNICEF. (2022). *Early Childhood Care and Education Global Report*.