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Qur'anic *Ta'lim* and Early Childhood Character Formation in Raudhatul Athfal (Islamic Preschools) in Makassar, Indonesia

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Abstract:
This study aims to analyze the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in Raudhatul Athfal (RA), examine its contribution to early childhood character formation, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation. This research employed a qualitative approach using a multiple-case study design conducted at three RA in Makassar affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving principals and teachers. Data were analyzed through within-case and cross-case analysis. The findings reveal that Qur'anic *ta'lim* has been implemented systematically through the integration of faith, worship, morality, and prophetic stories into daily learning activities. Despite differences in instructional strategies, all three RA share a common orientation toward internalizing Qur'anic values through habituation, teacher role modelling, and Islamic school culture. Qur'anic *ta'lim* contributes to the development of religious, social, and moral character, including honesty, responsibility, empathy, discipline, and respect for others. Its implementation is supported by program consistency, integrated learning materials, exemplary teachers, and a conducive school environment. However, limited parental involvement, socio-emotional challenges among children, and the need for more inclusive educational approaches remain obstacles. This study highlights Qur'anic *ta'lim* as a pedagogical mechanism for fostering holistic character development in early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

Global educational discourse increasingly recognizes character development and social values as central priorities of twenty-first-century education (Huda et al. 2022). UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework identifies character education, social responsibility, respect for diversity, and peacebuilding as essential components of sustainable educational development. Despite this emphasis, many educational systems continue to face challenges in effectively integrating character formation into teaching and learning processes (Halimatuzzuhrotulaini 2020). The growing emphasis on academic achievement often limits attention to moral and spiritual development (Munir 2020; Al-Qaradawi 1995; Fitrah and Hamka 2022). Within the context of Islamic education, this challenge highlights the need for educational approaches that

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simultaneously promote knowledge acquisition and character formation, one of which is Qur'anic *ta'lim*.

Qur'anic *ta'lim* refers to a process of teaching and learning that extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to include the cultivation of behavior and the application of values in everyday life (Amiruddin and Karima 2022; Jaya 2020; Ma'zumi, Syihabudin, and Najmudin 2019; Pratiwi et al. 2024). This approach positions education as a means of internalizing Islamic values by integrating intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions into a unified learning experience. Such a perspective is consistent with Al-Qaradawi's (1995) view that Islamic education should not be confined to intellectual development alone but must also foster character through a balanced integration of intellectual, spiritual, and ethical growth. Consequently, character formation in early childhood cannot be separated from the transmission of religious values rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The importance of Qur'anic *ta'lim* is reflected in the educational practices of Raudhatul Athfal (RA/Islamic preschools) institutions in Makassar. Preliminary field observations indicate that many RA schools have incorporated Qur'anic learning into daily educational activities through routine prayers, memorization of short Qur'anic chapters, moral instruction based on prophetic narratives, and regular Qur'an recitation and memorization programs. Nevertheless, significant variations exist in instructional approaches, program intensity, parental involvement, and strategies for connecting Qur'anic content with children's character development. In some institutions, Qur'anic *ta'lim* has evolved into a school-wide culture embedded throughout the learning process, whereas in others it remains primarily focused on developing children's recitation and memorization skills. These differences suggest that Qur'anic *ta'lim* has not yet been uniformly understood or implemented as a structured character education approach. This situation underscores the need for a more in-depth investigation into how Qur'anic *ta'lim* is implemented and how it contributes to character formation in formal Islamic early childhood education settings.

Previous studies have demonstrated the potential of Qur'an-based education to strengthen character development among young children. A study conducted at RA Darussalam Bogor found that learning activities integrating Islamic creed, worship, morality, the Qur'an, and Hadith contributed to the development of exemplary moral behavior among students (Hidayati 2017). Similarly, Bahagia et al. (2022) reported that *ta'lim* practices within community-based religious learning groups enhanced children's character through sustained role modeling within the family environment. Kusnan et al. (2022) further identified habituation practices and teacher role modeling as key factors in character formation within Raudhatul Athfal institutions.

Although character education in Islamic early childhood settings has received considerable scholarly attention, existing studies have largely focused on general Islamic religious education (Hidayati 2017; Hamid et al. 2022), habituation practices and teacher role modeling (Kusnan et al. 2022), and moral development through community-based religious activities such as *majlis ta'lim* (Bahagia et al. 2022). While these studies highlight the importance of religious values in children's character formation, they provide limited insight into Qur'anic *ta'lim* as a structured pedagogical practice within formal early childhood

education institutions. Furthermore, previous research has generally treated character education as an educational outcome rather than examining the mechanisms through which Qur'anic *ta'lim* is implemented, its specific contributions to character formation, and the contextual factors that facilitate or hinder its effectiveness. As a result, there remains a significant gap in understanding how Qur'anic *ta'lim* functions as a systematic character-building process within Raudhatul Athfal settings.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to analyze the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in Raudhatul Athfal institutions, examine its contribution to early childhood character formation, and identify the factors that support or hinder its implementation. The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of Qur'anic *ta'lim* as a pedagogical mechanism that integrates the transmission of Qur'anic values, behavioral habituation, and teacher role modeling in the process of character formation among young children. By doing so, this study contributes to the advancement of the conceptual framework of Qur'anic character education in early childhood settings and provides empirical evidence for the development of more holistic Islamic educational practices.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multiple-case study design. This design was selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of how Qur'anic *ta'lim* is implemented in fostering character formation among young children across different institutional contexts. The study was conducted in three Raudhatul Athfal (RA) schools in Makassar, each representing a distinct Islamic organizational affiliation: Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah. These sites were intentionally selected because they reflect diverse traditions of Islamic education, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic *ta'lim* practices in early childhood education.

The participants consisted of RA principals, classroom teachers, and teachers directly involved in Qur'anic *ta'lim* activities. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) a minimum of two years of teaching experience, (2) active involvement in Qur'anic *ta'lim* programs, and (3) willingness to participate in the study. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, that is, when no new information relevant to the research focus emerged.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and instructional strategies related to the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in early childhood character formation. Observations focused on classroom activities, religious habituation practices, teacher–student interactions, and character education practices within the school environment. Documentary sources included the curriculum, Daily Learning Implementation Plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Harian* [RPPH]), religious education programs, child development assessment records, activity photographs, and other relevant institutional documents.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. In the first stage, data from each RA were analyzed independently to identify patterns of

Qur'anic *ta'lim* implementation, forms of character development, and the supporting and constraining factors specific to each site. In the second stage, cross-case analysis was employed to identify commonalities, differences, and distinctive characteristics across the three RA schools representing different organizational affiliations. The analytical process involved data reduction, coding, theme development, interpretation, and conclusion drawing.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and site triangulation. Member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations of participants' experiences, while peer debriefing with fellow researchers was used to enhance the credibility of the findings. Participation was voluntary, and all participants' identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Qur'anic *Ta'lim* in Three RA in Makassar

The cross-case analysis of three RA schools affiliated with NU, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah revealed that Qur'anic *ta'lim* has become an integral component of early childhood education. Despite differences in institutional characteristics, all three schools position the Qur'an as the primary foundation for character education through religious habituation practices, moral instruction, and teacher role modelling.

The findings indicate that Qur'anic *ta'lim* is implemented through structured daily, weekly, and special educational programs. In the NU-affiliated RA, Qur'anic *ta'lim* is primarily integrated through worship habituation, daily prayers, and the use of Islamic exemplary stories as learning resources. In the Muhammadiyah-affiliated RA, Qur'anic values are embedded within thematic learning activities and student discipline development. Meanwhile, the Wahdah Islamiyah-affiliated RA places greater emphasis on *tahfidz* education through the regular application of *talaqqi* and *muraja'ah* methods. Although implementation strategies vary across institutions, all three schools share a common goal: fostering the internalization of Qur'anic values in children's everyday lives.

This shared orientation suggests that Qur'anic *ta'lim* is not viewed merely as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but rather as an ongoing process of character formation. These findings support the argument of Heriadi et al. (2024), who emphasize that consistent religious practices within school settings contribute significantly to the internalization of spiritual values and character development from an early age.

Across the three research sites, the content of Qur'anic *ta'lim* encompasses Islamic creed (*aqidah*), worship practices (*ibadah*), moral values (*akhlaq*), and stories of the prophets derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The integration of these components reflects an effort to promote Islamic education that extends beyond knowledge acquisition to include attitude formation and life-skill development. This finding is consistent with the integrative Islamic education framework proposed by Hamami and Nuryana (2022), which views knowledge, values, and life skills as interconnected dimensions of the educational process.

A notable difference among the three schools lies in their instructional approaches. The Wahdah Islamiyah-affiliated RA places greater emphasis on *tahfidz* instruction through the *talaqqi, sabaq, sabqi,* and *manzil* sequence as a means of internalizing Qur'anic values. In

contrast, the NU- and Muhammadiyah-affiliated schools combine Qur'an memorization with exemplary storytelling, behavioral habituation, and thematic learning activities grounded in Islamic values. These variations suggest that the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* is shaped by each institution's educational philosophy and organizational culture. Nevertheless, all approaches share the common objective of nurturing children's attachment to the Qur'an from an early age. This finding supports the study by Jivi et al. (2022), which demonstrates that *tahfidz* programs contribute not only to memorization skills but also to the development of discipline, spirituality, and self-regulation.

Another important finding concerns the central role of teachers in the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim*. Across all three schools, teachers function not only as instructors but also as role models who embody the values they seek to instill in their students. Teacher role modelling is reflected in respectful communication, consistent worship practices, and daily behaviors that are directly observed by children. This finding reinforces the social learning theory proposed by Bandura and Walters (1963), which suggests that children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation of significant role models. It also aligns with Hanafi et al. (2021), who identify teacher role modelling as a key factor in successful character education during early childhood.

Although the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* was generally effective, all three schools faced similar challenges, particularly regarding parental involvement. Participants reported that not all parents were able to consistently support Qur'an memorization activities and character-building practices at home. To address this issue, each school developed communication strategies through WhatsApp groups, child development reports, and school–home partnership programs. These findings support Dewi's (2022) argument that effective character education depends heavily on strong collaboration between educational institutions and families.

Beyond family support, the school environment also plays a crucial role in the success of Qur'anic *ta'lim*. The three schools cultivate Islamic learning environments through Qur'anic displays, prayer corners, greeting routines, and various religious activities that reinforce students' spiritual experiences. This finding is consistent with Arthur et al. (2017), who emphasize the significance of the hidden curriculum, whereby educational values are transmitted not only through formal instruction but also through school culture and the broader learning environment.

Overall, the cross-case analysis demonstrates that while the NU-, Muhammadiyah-, and Wahdah Islamiyah-affiliated RA schools employ different implementation strategies, they share a common commitment to character formation through Qur'anic education. Qur'anic *ta'lim* functions as a pedagogical mechanism that integrates value transmission, behavioral habituation, teacher role modelling, and Islamic school culture in fostering holistic character development among young children.

Early Childhood Character Formation through Qur'anic *Ta'lim*

The cross-case analysis of the three RA schools affiliated with NU, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah indicates that Qur'anic *ta'lim* serves not only as a means of strengthening children's religious competencies but also as a primary vehicle for character formation.

Although each institution employs strategies that reflect its organizational identity and educational traditions, all three share a common commitment to embedding Qur'anic values into children's daily behavior through habituation, role modelling, and repeated learning experiences.

The findings reveal that religious character is the most prominent outcome of Qur'anic *ta'lim* across the three research sites. Children are consistently encouraged to exchange Islamic greetings, recite prayers before and after activities, participate in basic worship practices, and memorize short chapters of the Qur'an as part of their daily routines. Teachers emphasized that these practices are intended not only to improve children's religious knowledge and skills but also to cultivate spiritual awareness from an early age. This finding supports the work of Syarnubi et al. (2021), who found that integrating Islamic education into everyday practices contributes to the development of religious behavior and social responsibility among children. Similarly, Heriadi et al. (2024) argue that spiritual values are more effectively internalized when reinforced through consistent daily habituation.

Beyond religious character, Qur'anic *ta'lim* also contributes to the development of children's social character. Informants across the three RA schools reported that values such as respect for teachers, appreciation of peers, sharing, helping others, and responsibility toward assigned tasks are continuously reinforced through classroom activities and social interactions. In the NU-affiliated RA, these values are primarily transmitted through exemplary stories of Islamic figures and the cultivation of courteous behavior. In the Muhammadiyah-affiliated RA, social character development is integrated into thematic learning and daily disciplinary practices. Meanwhile, the Wahdah Islamiyah-affiliated RA promotes social character through the cultivation of Islamic etiquette (*adab*) integrated into *tahfidz* activities. These findings are consistent with Rusilowati et al. (2024), who demonstrate that supportive learning environments foster the development of responsibility, cooperation, and respectful behavior among children.

Empathy also emerged as a significant character trait nurtured through Qur'anic *ta'lim*. Teachers at all three schools observed that children increasingly demonstrated concern for their peers, willingness to share, and readiness to help others facing difficulties. These dispositions were cultivated through collaborative activities, group play, and learning experiences that connected Qur'anic values with children's everyday social interactions. This finding supports Arthur et al. (2021), who argue that empathy in early childhood can be developed through social engagement combined with spiritual reflection and values-based learning.

Nevertheless, the study found that character development does not progress uniformly across all dimensions. Teachers in all three research sites identified patience and emotional self-regulation as areas requiring further reinforcement. Young children often displayed impulsive behavior, frustration, and difficulty waiting for their turn during learning activities. These findings suggest that character formation is a gradual developmental process shaped by multiple factors related to children's growth and maturation. This observation is consistent with Simon and Nader-Grosbois (2021), who highlight the influence of age, social context, and learning experiences on the development of emotional regulation skills in young children.

Teachers emerged as a central factor in the character formation process through Qur'anic *ta'lim*. Across all three RA schools, teachers functioned not only as instructors but also as role models who demonstrated the values they sought to instill in children. Their influence was reflected in respectful communication, disciplined conduct, consistency in worship practices, and constructive approaches to resolving classroom conflicts. These findings align with the social learning theory of Bandura and Walters (1963), which emphasizes that children learn by observing and imitating significant others. They also reinforce the findings of Yusutria and Sutarman (2021), who identify teacher role modelling, communication, and positive behavioral habituation as essential components of effective character education.

The cross-case analysis further revealed that character formation extends beyond formal instruction and is reinforced through the school culture cultivated within each RA. Learning environments enriched with Islamic symbols, greeting routines, courteous interactions, and various religious activities serve as effective mediums for value internalization. This finding supports the concept of the hidden curriculum described by Arthur et al. (2017), which suggests that educational values are transmitted not only through direct teaching but also through the cultural practices and social experiences embedded within school life.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Qur'anic *ta'lim* in the NU-, Muhammadiyah-, and Wahdah Islamiyah-affiliated RA schools contributes to the development of religious, social, and moral character among young children through behavioral habituation, teacher role modelling, value reinforcement, and Islamic school culture. Although implementation strategies vary across institutions, all cases indicate that Qur'anic *ta'lim* functions as an effective pedagogical mechanism for integrating religious learning with holistic character formation in early childhood education.

Supporting and Constraining Factors in the Implementation of *Qur'anic Ta'lim*

The cross-case analysis of the three RA schools affiliated with NU, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah revealed that the effectiveness of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in fostering early childhood character formation is influenced by a range of interconnected supporting and constraining factors. Despite differences in institutional backgrounds, the three research sites exhibited remarkably similar patterns regarding the conditions that shape the successful implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim*.

One of the most significant supporting factors identified across all three schools was the consistent implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* as an integral component of school culture. Qur'anic learning activities were routinely conducted through daily prayer practices, memorization of short Qur'anic chapters, worship activities, and the reinforcement of moral values in everyday interactions. Such consistency enabled repeated processes of value internalization, allowing Qur'anic teachings to be expressed not only as knowledge but also as observable behavior. This finding supports Heriadi et al. (2024), who emphasize that sustained religious practices play a crucial role in shaping children's habits and spiritual character from an early age.

In addition to program consistency, the comprehensiveness of the instructional content emerged as another important enabling factor. Across the three schools, Qur'anic *ta'lim* encompassed Islamic creed (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), moral values (*akhlaq*), and stories of

the prophets derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. This integrated curriculum provided children with learning experiences that extended beyond religious knowledge to include value understanding and practical application in daily life. The finding is consistent with Jivi et al. (2022), who argue that Islamic education integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions strengthens the process of value internalization among young children.

Teacher role modelling also emerged as a critical factor in successful character formation. Participants across the three RA schools emphasized that the effectiveness of Qur'anic *ta'lim* largely depended on teachers' consistency in demonstrating the values they sought to instill. Respectful conduct, discipline, responsibility, and commitment to worship served as direct examples from which children learned. This finding reinforces the work of Yusutria and Sutarman (2021), who identify teachers as primary agents of character formation through exemplary behavior and positive habituation practices.

A supportive school environment further contributed to the successful implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim*. The three schools cultivated learning environments enriched with Islamic values through religious symbols, greeting routines, collective worship activities, and various programs designed to strengthen children's spiritual experiences. These conditions suggest that character education extends beyond formal instruction and is reinforced through school culture and everyday social interactions. This finding aligns with the concept of the hidden curriculum discussed by Arthur et al. (2017), which highlights how educational values are often internalized through the cultural environment and practices of educational institutions.

Despite these strengths, the study also identified several factors that constrained the effectiveness of Qur'anic *ta'lim*. The most prominent challenge was limited parental involvement in supporting character formation at home. Teachers across all three schools reported that not all parents were able to consistently assist with Qur'an memorization, worship practices, or behavioral reinforcement outside school. As a result, discrepancies often emerged between the values promoted in school and the experiences children encountered within their families (Epstein 2018). This finding supports Dewi (2022), who argues that successful character education depends heavily on effective collaboration between schools and families.

Another challenge relates to children's socio-emotional development, particularly their ability to regulate emotions and cultivate patience. Participants noted that some children continued to struggle with emotional control, waiting their turn, and responding constructively to social conflicts. These observations suggest that the internalization of Qur'anic values is not a linear process but rather one that requires continuous guidance aligned with children's developmental stages. This finding is consistent with Simon and Nader-Grosbois (2021), who emphasize that emotional regulation develops through the interaction of age, social environment, and ongoing learning experiences.

The study further found that the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* faces challenges in accommodating learner diversity. In several cases, instructional approaches had not yet fully incorporated multicultural perspectives or adequately addressed individual learning needs. This issue is particularly relevant in urban contexts such as Makassar, where children come from diverse social, cultural, and family backgrounds. The finding supports Gunawan (2022), who

highlights the importance of integrating multicultural values into Islamic education so that learners can develop as both religiously grounded and socially inclusive individuals.

Teachers also reported challenges in providing appropriate support for children with special educational needs. Several participants emphasized the need for more adaptive instructional strategies to foster character development among children with diverse abilities and developmental profiles. This finding is consistent with Ainscow (2020), who argues that inclusive character education requires approaches tailored to the developmental characteristics and individual needs of each learner.

Overall, the cross-case analysis demonstrates that the successful implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in early childhood character formation is supported by program consistency, teacher role modelling, integrated learning content, and a supportive school culture. At the same time, limited parental involvement, socio-emotional challenges, the need for more inclusive educational practices, and the diversity of learners' backgrounds remain important issues requiring continued attention. These findings underscore that Qur'an-based character education requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving schools, families, and the broader social environment as an interconnected educational ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* in three RA schools affiliated with NU, Muhammadiyah, and Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar has become an integral part of early childhood education. Although each institution employs distinct educational traditions and implementation strategies, all three share a common commitment to using the Qur'an as the foundation for character formation through behavioral habituation, teacher role modelling, value reinforcement, and the cultivation of an Islamic school culture. In this context, Qur'anic *ta'lim* functions not only as a means of strengthening children's religious competencies but also as a pedagogical mechanism that promotes the development of religious, social, and moral character. Values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, discipline, care for others, and respect are nurtured through the integration of Qur'anic learning into children's everyday experiences within the school environment.

The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of Qur'anic *ta'lim* is supported by several interconnected factors, including program consistency, integrated learning content, teacher role modelling, and a school environment that facilitates continuous value internalization. Conversely, limited parental involvement, challenges related to children's socio-emotional development, the need for more inclusive educational approaches, and the diversity of learners' backgrounds may hinder the effectiveness of Qur'an-based character education. These findings reinforce the understanding that Qur'anic character formation cannot rely solely on formal instruction but requires meaningful collaboration among schools, families, and the broader social environment as an interconnected educational ecosystem.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of Islamic early childhood education by conceptualizing Qur'anic *ta'lim* as a pedagogical mechanism that integrates Qur'anic value transmission, behavioral habituation, teacher role modelling, and school culture in the process of character formation. Practically, the findings provide empirical insights into the

implementation of Qur'anic *ta'lim* across Islamic educational institutions with different organizational affiliations and may serve as a reference for school leaders, teachers, and policymakers seeking to develop more integrated, collaborative, and contextually responsive character education programs.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in only three RA schools in Makassar; therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized to all Islamic early childhood education institutions in Indonesia. In addition, the study primarily explored the perspectives of teachers and school administrators and did not fully capture the experiences of parents and children, both of whom play important roles in the character formation process. Future research is encouraged to include a broader range of educational settings, incorporate the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, and develop evaluation frameworks or assessment instruments capable of measuring the effectiveness of Qur'anic *ta'lim* more systematically. Such efforts would contribute to a more comprehensive and sustainable understanding of Qur'an-based character education in increasingly diverse educational contexts.

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Author Contributions

The first author conceptualized the study, designed the research, conducted data collection and analysis, and prepared the manuscript. The second, third, and fourth authors provided academic supervision, contributed to the development of the research design and data interpretation, and critically revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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