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# Habituation of Short Surah Memorization to Develop Discipline in Early Childhood: A Faith-Based Character Education Approach

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## Abstract

Amid growing concerns regarding the erosion of self-regulation and rule adherence among young learners, this study investigates how short surah memorization contributes to discipline formation in early childhood. Conducted at TK Islam Bakti IV Surabaya, this qualitative case study involved students, teachers, and parents participating in a structured Quranic memorization program. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, then processed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings demonstrate that daily memorization routines significantly enhance children's discipline, particularly in the areas of punctuality, responsibility, rule-following, and focus. Students who engaged consistently in memorization exhibited observable improvements in time management, task commitment, and behavioral self-regulation. Teachers structured learning schedules around specific surah targets, while parents extended reinforcement at home, creating a cohesive framework of habituation. Furthermore, spiritual motivation among students emerged as a strong internal driver sustaining disciplined behavior beyond external supervision. These outcomes affirm that religious memorization is not merely cognitive training but also a means of cultivating character values. The study highlights the significance of integrating faith-based habituation into early childhood character education to promote behavioral consistency and moral grounding. Nonetheless, the findings are limited by the single-site nature of the study and its culturally homogeneous participants. Broader research across diverse settings is recommended to validate the effectiveness of Quranic memorization in discipline development. Educational institutions are encouraged to design character education programs that harmonize religious values with structured behavioral reinforcement to support holistic child development.

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## Introduction

Early childhood education is a vital phase that supports the holistic development of children, including their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. It shapes children's personalities, instills core values, and equips them with the foundational skills necessary for lifelong learning and success (Pebriana, 2017). The Indonesian National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 underscores the significance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in fostering integrated development among children aged 0–6 years by emphasizing the creation of structured and nurturing learning environments.

A central challenge in ECE is fostering character, especially disciplinary traits. Discipline reflects key moral behaviors such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect—essential components of a child's social adaptation and ethical development. Such character is cultivated through habitual practices involving punctuality, adherence to rules, and behavioral regulation, which are reinforced in everyday routines (Astuti et al., 2023; Nadlifah et al., 2023). These habits not only support classroom order but also build foundational life skills for future social integration.

Many kindergartens face difficulties in implementing effective discipline strategies. Moral education that promotes courage and behavioral consistency remains a key approach, aiming to internalize desirable habits in children's daily lives (Mahmuda et al., 2019; Tabi'in, 2017). Discipline enables children to function within social systems, aiding interpersonal interactions and adaptive behavior (Afida & Kholis, 2023). This underscores the importance of integrating consistent moral instruction with daily classroom routines to build strong behavioral foundations.

Effective habituation strategies require structured methods. Modeling by parents and teachers, coupled with daily routines and consistent expectations, proves beneficial in reinforcing discipline (Nadlifah et al., 2023). Behavioral reinforcement through reward systems also supports autonomy and responsibility (Puspita et al., 2022). Continuous evaluation via observation and anecdotal records ensures consistent implementation and improvement of disciplinary programs (Tabi'in, 2017).

Complicating these efforts is the increasing exposure of children to digital media, which introduces potential negative influences during the formative years of ages 4–6. This reality necessitates robust moral scaffolding, where structured character education—based on modeling, reinforcement, and evaluation—becomes even more critical. Without such scaffolding, children may adopt inconsistent values that conflict with the educational objectives promoted in formal settings. Therefore, addressing media influence through disciplined value formation must become a priority in early education.

The role of both educators and parents is paramount. Parents guide children's moral behavior at home, while educators establish consistent routines in school. Habit formation through structured schedules helps internalize positive behavior (Vitaloka, 2021). Discipline, in this context, involves not only adherence to rules but also responsibility and respect for authority (Ayub, 2022). When both school and home environments align in their expectations and practices, children are more likely to internalize and sustain disciplined behaviors.

One promising model for instilling discipline is through religious and moral education. In TK Islam Bakti IV, the regular memorization of short surahs has emerged as a key mechanism in shaping disciplined behavior. Integrated practices such as congregational Dhuha prayers and Quranic memorization serve as foundational components of the school's educational routine. Observational data suggests that students engaged in these routines demonstrate enhanced discipline, including patience, persistence, and rule compliance.

This study offers a novel perspective by providing empirical insights into the habituation of Quranic memorization and its role in character education. Previous studies have examined discipline via general routine building (Abidin, 2019) or parental influence (Khaironi, 2017), but few have analyzed the religious dimension of discipline building in early childhood. While existing research has addressed memorization strategies, engagement, and cognitive-emotional benefits (Nurkhayati & Sutrisno, 2022; Podungge et al., 2023), limited attention has been paid to how religious habituation fosters character development. Related studies have emphasized psychological gains (Rozali et al., 2022) and enhanced emotional expression through artistic recitation (Nurhanifah et al., 2024).

Some recent works link short surah memorization to improved discipline markers such as attendance and classroom engagement (Nurhanifah et al., 2024; Suyitno, 2024), along with deeper moral internalization like compassion and responsibility (Nurchayani et al., 2023). Nevertheless, few studies have systematically examined the habituation process as a character-building strategy in early education. Most discussions have prioritized academic performance and memorization efficiency, rather than examining religious routines as a foundation for moral education.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how the routine practice of short surah memorization in Islamic kindergarten settings influences the development of disciplinary behavior in early childhood. This exploration contributes fresh insights to the discourse on religious-based moral education and offers practical recommendations for enhancing discipline

through structured Quranic programs. The study underscores the distinct role of religious habituation in character formation and expands the theoretical and practical framework for early childhood discipline development.

## Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically through verbal descriptions in a natural context (Nasution, 2023). Specifically, this study uses a descriptive narrative method to examine the Memorizing Short Verses Habit Formation program in fostering discipline among early childhood students at TK Islam Bakti IV Surabaya (Mulyana, 2018). The qualitative design adopted in this research aligns with a case study framework. This framework allows for an in-depth analysis of individual and contextual experiences within the school setting.

Data collection techniques included direct observations of student engagement and behavioral patterns, in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and parents, as well as document analysis of lesson plans, student progress records, and school reports. Observational protocols and semi-structured interview guides were utilized to ensure consistency and focus in data gathering. These instruments helped standardize the research process while allowing flexibility for rich, emergent insights. The data sources and instruments were selected to reflect a triangulated view of the educational environment.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved identifying and organizing meaningful units and themes from the collected data. Data presentation was carried out through the arrangement of information in descriptive tables, narratives, and visual aids to support clarity and coherence. The final stage involved interpreting emerging patterns to assess the program's impact on student discipline.

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources, member checking, and careful documentation of the analytic process. Triangulation allowed the researcher to validate findings by comparing multiple data types and perspectives. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with selected participants to enhance credibility. Documentation of the entire analysis process further ensured dependability and transparency.

The researcher functioned as the primary instrument in this qualitative inquiry, engaging directly in field observation and interpretation. This active involvement enabled the researcher to gain nuanced understanding while maintaining reflexivity to mitigate potential biases. The role of the researcher also included maintaining ethical standards and building rapport with participants. Although the qualitative nature of this study limits generalizability, its rich contextual insights contribute meaningfully to understanding character education practices in early childhood settings.

This structured and rigorous analysis provides a reliable foundation for interpreting the effectiveness of the Memorizing Short Verses Habit Formation program. The findings offer empirical insights into how religious habit formation strategies influence discipline in early childhood. These results can inform future educational interventions focused on character building. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of integrating religious practices into early childhood education settings.

## Result

### Application of Discipline Character through Memorization

The study revealed that the implementation of discipline character in students was effectively fostered through the habituation of Qur'an memorization, which was operationally defined by the consistent scheduling of daily recitations, structured repetition of short surahs, and reinforcement through verbal and non-verbal cues from teachers. This habituation was

observed through behavioral consistency over time, such as punctuality, focus, and adherence to routines. The structured program at TK Islam Bakti IV emphasized daily recitation and memorization of short surahs, reinforcing discipline as a habitual practice.

Teachers guided students systematically by assigning specific surahs for memorization each week, conducting daily check-ins, and using positive reinforcement such as praise and reward stickers. They also maintained consistency in recitation schedules by setting fixed times during morning and midday sessions, while ensuring a supportive learning environment through personalized encouragement and small group guidance. One of the key strategies applied was integrating Qur'an memorization into students' daily routines. This structured approach cultivated a sense of commitment and responsibility among students. A teacher, Ustazah Aisyah, stated

*"The memorization program instills discipline and reverence for Quranic teachings in students. Through daily recitation and memorization, students develop a sense of commitment and responsibility toward their religious duties."*

Furthermore, habituation methods were employed to strengthen positive behaviors. The repetitive process of memorization helped embed disciplined behavior in students' daily lives, making it an ingrained practice rather than a forced obligation. Interviews with the principal also reinforced the importance of structured learning. Principal Ustaz Ahmad emphasized: *"Our goal is not just for students to memorize, but to shape their character. Discipline in memorization translates to discipline in life."*

### **Assessment of Discipline Character through Memorization**

The effectiveness of Qur'an memorization in developing discipline was evaluated through triangulated methods, including systematic teacher observations recorded over a six-week period, structured parental interviews focusing on behavioral changes at home, and qualitative assessments of student performance during memorization sessions. Teachers employed observation checklists to monitor punctuality, focus, and participation, while parents were invited to provide feedback through semi-structured interviews that captured their perceptions of routine adherence, responsibility, and time management.

Teachers noted significant behavioral improvements, such as increased focus, punctuality, and responsibility. Ustaz Hadi described:

*"The program is structured to incorporate Quran recitation and memorization into students' daily routines. Through consistent practice and gradual learning, students develop a strong foundation in Quranic studies and discipline."*

Parents also highlighted the positive changes in their children, particularly in time management and adherence to schedules. A parent, Mrs. Fatimah, commented

*"We value the Quran memorization program highly as it instills Islamic teachings and values in our children from a young age. It helps them develop a strong connection with the Quran and fosters a sense of spirituality and discipline."*

A father, Mr. Ridwan, further explained

*"My child has become more responsible since joining this program. He knows when to recite and memorize, and this discipline carries over into his daily activities."*

Additionally, students displayed improved academic performance, as their ability to concentrate and retain information was enhanced by the memorization exercises. The practice of memorizing verses required cognitive discipline, reinforcing memory retention skills that translated into other learning areas.

### **Factors Influencing Discipline Character through Memorization**

One of the key factors influencing the development of discipline through Qur'an memorization is the ideal age and early exposure. Early childhood is recognized as a critical stage for instilling disciplined behaviors. The earlier a child begins memorizing the Qur'an, the easier it becomes for them to internalize consistent habits and structured routines. This foundational period

allows discipline to be cultivated more naturally as part of the child's daily life and learning process.

Another contributing factor is the presence of a supportive learning environment. A structured and distraction-free atmosphere significantly enhances a student's ability to maintain focus and adhere to regular memorization practices. Consistent routines, designated study times, and guidance from teachers all support the development of disciplined behavior. Additionally, repetition strategies and habit formation play a crucial role. Regularly reciting the same verses not only strengthens memorization but also builds self-regulation and persistence over time. As noted by Ustazah Rahma:

*"Habituation helps students internalize positive behaviors and values, shaping their character over time. By consistently practicing good habits, students develop discipline, resilience, and integrity."*

Parental involvement is another vital factor. When parents actively participate in and monitor their children's memorization routines, discipline is reinforced beyond the classroom. This shared responsibility between home and school fosters consistency and motivation. One parent, Mrs. Siti, emphasized the importance of maintaining a structured routine at home:

*"At home, we remind our children about their daily memorization. It has become part of our routine, strengthening their discipline and love for the Quran."*

Finally, intrinsic motivation and spiritual growth significantly influence students' commitment to memorization. Children who view the activity as spiritually meaningful are more likely to display perseverance and self-discipline. The sense of connection to their faith and the desire to please both God and their loved ones encourage consistent learning behavior. For example, Ahmad, a 6-year-old student, shared:

*"I love to recite because it makes me feel close to Allah and makes my parents happy."*

Similarly, Zainab, age 5, expressed her motivation by saying:

*"Every day I try not to miss my surah because my teacher will ask me, and I want to make her proud."*

In summary, this study shows that Qur'an memorization contributes meaningfully to building discipline in young learners. Early exposure, consistent routines, supportive environments, and strong parental involvement all play a role in shaping responsible behavior. When combined with spiritual motivation, these elements create a foundation for lasting character development rooted in daily practice and meaningful purpose.

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of Qur'an memorization in fostering discipline character among early childhood learners. Through structured habituation, repetition strategies, and a supportive environment, students develop discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. Furthermore, parental support and intrinsic motivation serve as critical factors in ensuring the long-term success of this character development approach. This study underscores the need for a holistic educational model that integrates memorization with moral and character development, aligning with principles from character education theory such as Lickona's framework, which emphasizes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as the foundation of ethical behavior. Future research could explore the longitudinal effects of Qur'an memorization on students' overall personal growth and its impact on their academic and social development.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that short surah memorization plays a significant role in cultivating discipline among early childhood students. The structured program at TK Islam Bakti IV integrates Quranic teachings into daily routines, reinforcing children's sense of responsibility and religious commitment. Consistent with prior studies (Maulidin et al., 2024; Nurzannah, 2022; Yulianingsih, 2023), this structured repetition method develops patience, perseverance, and internalized values through habituation. Teachers noted that students engaged in



memorization demonstrated improved time management and focus, aligning with findings that structured routines foster character and value formation (Palupi & Sawitri, 2017).

The implementation of Quran memorization as a character education tool reflects the principle of value habituation in moral development (Kushariyati et al., 2024). The school leadership also emphasizes the moral rather than purely cognitive goal of memorization (Trihantoyo, 2017), illustrating that such programs aim to shape disciplined behavior as well as religious knowledge. However, this approach is not without challenges. Variability in students' capabilities and limited time availability can hinder uniform success (Susanti & Risminawati, 2018). These limitations are often mitigated through consistent teacher guidance and a structured, supportive learning environment.

This method's applicability extends beyond face-to-face learning, particularly during pandemic-driven remote education, where memorization helped sustain learning discipline (Nastiti, 2022). Discipline formed through Quranic practices also correlates positively with academic success, reinforcing the broader impact of character-based education (Manaf et al., 2022). Techniques such as drill and practice have further strengthened memorization fluency and learning outcomes (Uswah, 2021), although challenges remain in sustaining motivation and managing home practice, especially in the presence of distractions (Yusuf & Rifa'i, 2024).

One of the study's key contributions lies in shifting attention from cognitive benefits of Quran memorization to its impact on behavioral discipline. This fills an existing gap in character education literature. Structured memorization fosters punctuality and rule-following, as supported by observations from both teachers and previous findings on routine-based behavioral development (Nadlifah et al., 2023). Compared with more entertaining memorization approaches, such as Muri-Q, which uses rhythm (Nurkhayati & Sutrisno, 2022), the TK Islam Bakti IV program emphasizes repetition and habit formation, which appear more effective for long-term disciplinary outcomes.

In addition to discipline, this study confirms that Quranic memorization builds broader moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and emotional resilience (Nurhanifah et al., 2024; Susilo, 2020). These moral traits are essential in shaping students' behavioral patterns both within and beyond the classroom. The integration of memorization with daily religious practices allows for internalization of values rather than temporary behavioral compliance. These findings suggest a more holistic character development model than conventional moral reasoning programs (Salsabila & Lessy, 2022), as memorization embeds values through spiritual practice rather than just cognitive understanding.

The memorization practice is also associated with improvements in memory retention and cognitive skills across subjects, as reported by both teachers and parents. This is consistent with research on tahfidz programs (Hanafi et al., 2021; Rokhimah & Herianingtyas, 2023), which highlight the cognitive enhancements gained from consistent Quranic memorization. These cognitive benefits extend beyond religious knowledge and contribute to overall academic development. While methods like Mauro's have targeted children with special needs (Amani et al., 2024), this study demonstrates how structured memorization benefits neurotypical students by reinforcing habits such as persistence and concentration.

Parental and teacher support emerges as a crucial enabler in students' memorization success. Active parental involvement ensures that memorization becomes part of the home routine (Huzaery et al., 2024). Positive reinforcement from teachers, including rewards and verbal encouragement, further enhances motivation (Febianti, 2018). Intrinsic motivation, particularly rooted in spiritual purpose, has shown to be as effective—if not more—than extrinsic rewards in shaping disciplined behavior. This collaboration between school and home creates a consistent support system that sustains children's learning and character development over time.

Compared to secular discipline strategies, Quranic memorization provides a faith-integrated framework where behavioral expectations align with moral and spiritual teachings. This creates deeper student engagement and moral awareness, strengthening both religious

character and commitment to routine (Lilawati, 2024). Rather than regulating behavior externally, this model nurtures internal self-discipline. The integration of memorization with religious identity ensures that students internalize ethical principles as part of their daily behavior, not merely as school obligations.

Several key factors identified in this study include early age exposure, minimal distraction environments, consistent repetition, parental collaboration, and intrinsic spiritual motivation. These findings align with broader literature supporting the role of structured Quran memorization in punctuality and behavioral consistency (Rohmah & Nursikhin, 2023; Rohmatun & Widiyono, 2024). Learning environments grounded in models like the Dzatiya Da'wah Wheel and Circle Communication Pattern provide additional support for behavior shaping (Amin & Laisbuke, 2024).

Furthermore, repetition as a disciplinary reinforcement aligns with the evidence of its positive influence on learning consistency and performance (Fitriani & Ismaniar, 2024). Even corrective strategies such as using Quranic verse memorization as constructive punishment have shown efficacy (Indra et al., 2022). This integrative system—where parental roles, repetition, motivation, and spiritual meaning intersect—provides a comprehensive pathway for instilling discipline in early childhood education (Nailah et al., 2024).

## Conclusion

The analysis concludes that habituating the memorization of short surahs at Bakti IV Islamic Kindergarten significantly fosters discipline in early childhood by enhancing both cognitive recall and character values like responsibility, perseverance, and rule adherence. The program's success is driven by strong teacher-parent collaboration, a structured and spiritually engaging learning environment, and students' intrinsic motivation. Moreover, the repetitive and consistent nature of memorization helps instill discipline as a habit rather than a forced behavior. This approach not only nurtures moral values but also builds a foundation for future learning discipline. These findings affirm that faith-based education, especially through Qur'anic memorization, is a powerful approach for early character building and provide practical insights for schools aiming to integrate spiritual and behavioral development.

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