



## PAI TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN IMPLEMENTING THE 7 HABITS OF GREAT CHILDREN IN THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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### Abstrack

*This study aims to describe the implementation of Islamic educational values in shaping students' disciplinary character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The research focuses on the internalization process of aqidah, akhlaq, and ibadah values in developing students' disciplined behavior, as well as the disciplinary guidance strategies applied by teachers and the institution. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that Islamic educational values play an important role in shaping students' disciplinary character through Islamic Religious Education learning, habituation of religious activities, and teacher role modeling. Disciplinary guidance strategies are carried out through persuasive and humanistic approaches, such as providing rewards, positive reinforcement, rule reminders, personal counseling, and implementation of educational consequences. This approach aligns with Bandura's social learning theory on behavioral modeling and Skinner's reinforcement theory emphasizing the importance of positive reinforcement. The implementation of Islamic educational values is proven effective in developing students' discipline in terms of punctuality, adherence to school regulations, academic responsibility, and consistency in performing worship.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Education, Discipline, Character Building, Islamic Values.*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan strategi guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam menerapkan 7 Kebiasaan Anak Hebat serta menganalisis faktor pendukung dan penghambat pelaksanaannya pada siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan 7 Kebiasaan Anak Hebat dilakukan melalui empat strategi utama, yaitu keteladanan guru, penguatan positif, integrasi nilai kebiasaan dalam pembelajaran PAI, dan kolaborasi antara guru dan orang tua. Strategi tersebut terbukti efektif dalam membentuk karakter religius, disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan sikap sosial positif siswa. Faktor pendukung keberhasilan program meliputi komitmen guru,



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kedekatan emosional guru dan siswa, keterlibatan orang tua, serta monitoring melalui Buku 7 Kebiasaan Anak Hebat. Adapun faktor penghambat terdiri atas keterbatasan waktu pembiasaan di sekolah dan ketidakkonsistenan pendampingan sebagian orang tua di rumah. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran PAI berbasis pembiasaan dan keteladanan dapat dijadikan model strategis dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter Islami di sekolah dasar serta menjadi acuan bagi guru dan sekolah dalam merancang program karakter yang kolaboratif dan berkelanjutan.

**Kata Kunci:** Strategi Guru, 7 Kebiasaan Anak Hebat, Pendidikan Agama Islam

### **Introduction**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the character and personality of students so that they are based on Islamic values (Ghazali et al., 2025; Niskaromah et al., 2025; Taufik, 2020; Wahyudi et al., 2024). Through PAI learning, teachers not only act as transmitters of knowledge, but also function as role models who instill comprehensive moral and spiritual values in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Lestari et al., 2025; Marlina et al., 2025). The existence of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level is very important because this period is the most fundamental period for character formation (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022). From the perspective of 21st-century character education, the need to develop a generation that is knowledgeable, ethical, empathetic, collaborative, and creative is becoming increasingly urgent in line with the challenges of globalization and technological development.

The urgency of character education in the modern era is emphasized by various experts, stating that the ideal curriculum not only develops intellectual intelligence but also moral and social skills to shape citizens capable of making positive contributions to society. Research by Agung et al (2023) and Widiastuti & Hanif (2024) shows that integrated character education in learning impacts strengthening nationalism, critical thinking skills, and student creativity. Similarly, Sitepu (2025) emphasizes the relevance of learning based on local cultural contexts to strengthen student identity as a crucial part of character formation in the 21st century. Thus, character education for elementary school students represents a long-term investment in the nation's moral resilience.

However, character formation in elementary school students—especially in the upper grades—still faces significant challenges. Various studies have noted a gap between the ideal concept of character education and learning practices in the field (Ratri & Atmojo, 2024; Urfa et al., 2024). Some teachers still identify character education solely as enforcing discipline, not necessarily instilling moral values integrated into the learning process (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Other challenges include a lack of pedagogical training, a school culture that does not support the internalization of values, and the strong influence of digital media on student behavior. This situation suggests the need for more creative, participatory, and collaborative character learning strategies with parents and the community.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) education, religious character formation is a top priority. PAI serves to instill noble morals as an integral part of daily life. Research by Sari et al (2025) and Al-Baihaqi et al (2024) shows that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a significant role in shaping

religious character through role models, advice, instilling habits, and strengthening school culture. Even during online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, Fajrin et al., 2025 and Latifah & Nurhikmah (2024) found that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers continued to strive to maintain Islamic culture through spiritual guidance and structured worship activities. This reinforces the belief that the success of character education is highly dependent on the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as moral role models and behavioral models.

In line with this urgency, the concept of the 7 Habits of Great Children emerged as a systematic character-building approach relevant to the needs of elementary school students. Habits such as waking up early, praying, exercising, eating healthily, enjoying learning, socializing well, and going to bed on time have been proven to align with the principles of good morals in Islam. This approach emphasizes not only personal habits but also fosters social responsibility through harmonious interactions with the environment. Numerous studies confirm the success of this model in developing students' character traits of discipline, independence, religiosity, and social ethics when consistently applied through learning that exemplifies these values.

The 7 Habits of Great Children program has been implemented, specifically for fifth-grade students, as part of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to foster positive behaviors both at school and at home. However, its implementation has not been fully optimized. Challenges remain, such as students' inconsistency in carrying out daily habits, limited teacher supervision outside of school hours, and learning strategies that have not optimally internalized these habits into the learning routine. This situation indicates a gap between the theory and practice of character education in elementary schools, necessitating more creative, adaptive, and collaborative teacher strategies to ensure these values are continuously instilled.

Given this gap, this study is necessary to in-depth describe Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children in the classrooms of fifth-grade students. This study utilizes Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which states that human behavior is shaped through observation, imitation, and modeling of the environment. The application of this theory to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning emphasizes that teacher role models are key to developing positive habits in students. Therefore, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of habit-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning models, as well as practical benefits for teachers in designing more effective and contextual Islamic character education strategies.

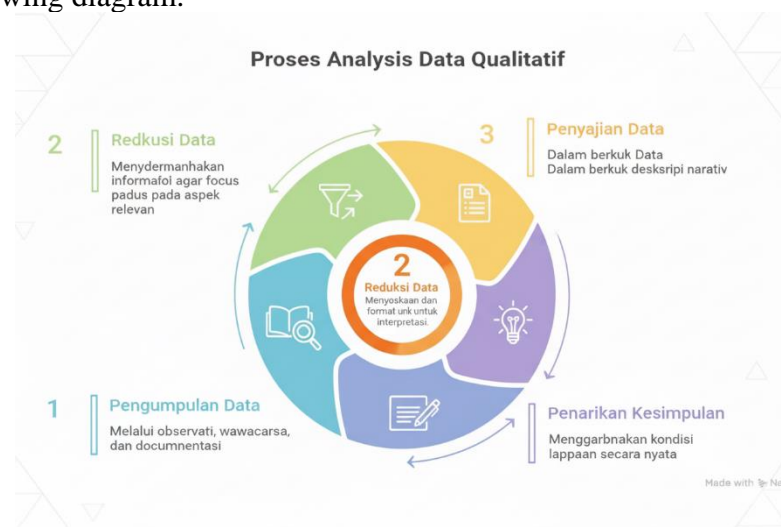
## **Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive overview of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children in learning activities. This approach was chosen because it was deemed most appropriate for uncovering phenomena naturally without any manipulation of variables or direct intervention from the researcher, thus providing a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the situation on the ground (Pugu et al., 2024).

The data analysis process in this study employed an interactive analysis model encompassing four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Spradley & Huberman, 2024). Data

collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain accurate information regarding Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children . Next, data was collected through a data reduction process, which included selecting, focusing, and simplifying data according to the research topic. Only information relevant to the research problem was retained, while data not supporting the research objectives was eliminated.

Next, the data was presented in the form of descriptive narratives and interview excerpts to facilitate understanding and provide a clear picture of the research findings in the field. The final stage was conclusion drawing, which is the process of interpreting the meaning of the presented data by connecting it to theory and previous findings. Conclusions were drawn continuously and verified by comparing results from various data sources to ensure the research is valid and accountable (Juliana, 2025). All stages of research, from preparation to data analysis, are systematically arranged and visualized in the form of a chart like the following diagram.



**Figure 1.** Research Process Flow

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, while method triangulation employed multiple data collection techniques to confirm the validity of the information obtained. This triangulation application aims to strengthen the validity and reliability of qualitative research findings in the field of education.

This research design aims to obtain a factual, objective, and contextual overview of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children in learning . Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study aims to demonstrate how instilling religious values can strengthen the character and learning behavior of elementary school students.

## Results and Discussion

### Implementation of Islamic Education Teachers' Exemplary Behavior in Forming Student Habits

The research results show that role modeling is the primary strategy employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children . PAI teachers practice role modeling through their daily behavior, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers arrive on time, are polite, practice

greetings, and demonstrate a commitment to worship and responsibility as a model for students. This modeling process encourages students to emulate positive behaviors, such as discipline, cooperation, and personal hygiene. Morning exercise with students and the PE teacher provides a means of directly demonstrating this role modeling, while also creating a character-building learning environment.

The importance of role modeling is clearly illustrated by the statement of PAI teacher, Moh. Faiq, who said: *"Children don't just need to be told; they need to see real examples from their teachers. If teachers arrive on time, maintain cleanliness, and are polite, the children will follow suit."* Similar support came from Physical Education (PJOK) teacher Zaiful Efendi, who said: *"We often assess the children's cooperation and sportsmanship during sports. These values are also included in the good habits assessed in their books."*

Responses from students and parents also confirmed the success of this role model. Fifth-grade homeroom teacher Samsul Hadi emphasized that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher's exemplary behavior has resulted in changes in student behavior: *"The children have become more disciplined and respectful. They imitate the way the PAI teacher speaks and behaves."* Meanwhile, parent Ika Susanti reported positive changes at home: *"Since frequently participating in activities with the PAI teacher, my child has become more polite and diligent in helping his parents."* This finding was reinforced by an interview with a student named Zaini: *"When the teacher comes early and participates in sports, we are also enthusiastic. The PAI teacher said that diligence is part of worship."*

The results of triangulation of observations, interviews, and documentation show that Islamic Religious Education teachers consistently demonstrate exemplary behavior. Photos of morning exercise activities with teachers and students serve as visual evidence that teachers act as role models of discipline and sportsmanship (look figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Morning Sports Activities with PJOK Teachers and Students as a Form of Habituation to Discipline and Cooperation

This finding aligns with Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986), which emphasizes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. From an Islamic perspective, exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) is a fundamental teaching, as stated by Allah in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

Meaning: *"Indeed, there is in (the person of) the Messenger of Allah a good role model for you..."*

This verse strengthens the role of teachers as moral and spiritual role models in the formation of students' morals.

#### Positive Reinforcement of Good Student Behavior

The second strategy implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers is positive reinforcement to foster voluntary good behavior. Islamic Religious Education teachers provide appreciation through praise, star symbols, and positive notes in the "7 Habits of Great Children" book. This book serves as a monitoring tool for students' behavior against seven core habits, such as religious discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and courtesy. This strategy builds students' internal motivation to behave well without coercion and fosters a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

Islamic Religious Education teacher, Moh. Faiq, emphasized: "Every child brings a book of "7 Habits of Great Children." If they are disciplined and demonstrate good behavior, I give them a star or praise. If there are shortcomings, we gently guide them to improve." The fifth-grade homeroom teacher, Samsul Hadi, also saw the impact of this strategy on student motivation: "The children become more enthusiastic. Once they receive a star or praise, they will strive to maintain it." From the parents' perspective, this strategy has received strong support. Parent Ika Susanti stated: "My children are happy when I sign and praise them. Now they are more diligent in praying and helping their parents at home."

Data triangulation confirmed that positive reinforcement creates a pleasant learning environment and strengthens students' intrinsic motivation. Theoretically, this strategy aligns with the principle of *targhib* in Islamic education—rewarding good behavior.

#### Collaboration Between Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Parents in Character Building

The success of the 7 Habits of Great Children program depends not only on teacher strategies but also on family support. Islamic Religious Education teachers, along with homeroom teachers, actively communicate with parents through class WhatsApp groups, parent-teacher meetings, and private messages to ensure consistent character building at home. This collaboration is crucial because some habits, such as waking up early, praying on time, eating healthy, and sleeping regularly, are more prevalent within the family environment.

Islamic Religious Education teacher, Moh. Faiq, explained: "*We always encourage parents to monitor their children at home. If they are accustomed to praying Dhuha prayer and praying before studying at school, we hope they will do the same at home.*" Parent Ika Susanti confirmed the collaboration: "*Teachers usually provide information through WhatsApp groups, so I help remind my children of daily habits like prayer and homework.*"

From the teacher's perspective, parent reports serve as a basis for evaluating student character. According to fifth-grade homeroom teacher Samsul Hadi, "*If a child is inconsistent, we follow up with guidance and reinforcement in class.*" Data triangulation shows that school-parent collaboration is effective and a determining factor in the success of student character development. Previous literature also emphasizes that consistent character education requires the involvement of the entire educational ecosystem, including the family.

#### Continuous Evaluation and Reinforcement of Habit Development Results

The evaluation phase is conducted continuously to ensure that character development is truly embedded in students. The practice of worship is one of the strongest evaluation indicators, particularly through the congregational Dhuha prayer every morning in the school prayer room. The Islamic Religious Education teacher leads this prayer activity as a form of mentoring and spiritual strengthening for the students. This habit fosters religious awareness, time discipline, and personal responsibility in the students.

The Islamic Religious Education teacher stated: "This Dhuha prayer has become one of the main habits we foster every morning so that they get used to praying without being told." Positive changes have also been felt by students and parents. A student named Zaini said: "Now I like praying Dhuha with my friends. I used to be lazy, but because I pray with the ustadz every morning, I've become accustomed to it." A parent added: "My child now often asks to pray Dhuha alone at home."

Photographic documentation of the Dhuha prayer demonstrates students performing the congregational prayer with full awareness. This practice has a theological basis in Islam. Allah SWT states in Surah An-Nur [24]: 37 about those who do not neglect to remember Allah amidst worldly activities. Furthermore, a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) narrated by Muslim reinforces the virtue of the Dhuha prayer as a highly recommended form of worship and as a means of fostering spiritual discipline. Therefore, habituation evaluation is not merely a behavioral assessment, but also an effort to foster an awareness of worship from an early age.

From an educational theory perspective, this continuous evaluation strategy aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that environmental reinforcement plays a crucial role in shaping behavior. The spiritual and social evaluations conducted by Islamic Religious Education teachers demonstrate that religious education can be a foundation for effective Islamic character formation.

#### Synthesis of Research Findings

Overall, the research findings indicate that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies at Besuk Kidul Elementary School in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children were planned, systematic, and collaborative. Four main strategies—exemplary behavior, positive reinforcement, integration of habituation into learning, and school-parent collaboration—had a significant impact on the development of religious character, discipline, and responsibility in students. Supporting factors for the program included teacher commitment, family collaboration, and monitoring through the 7 Habits of Great Children book. Obstacles identified included limited time for habituation and a lack of regular home support for some students.

These findings reinforce Bandura's theory that social models (teachers) have a fundamental influence on the formation of student behavior. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the strategies implemented by teachers demonstrate that character education based on Islamic values can be transferred not only through knowledge, but more importantly—through role models, habituation, and environmental support.

The discussion of the results of this study confirms that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in internalizing the 7 Habits of Great Children aligns with the urgency of character education in 21st-century learning. The finding that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers use

role models, positive reinforcement, value integration in learning, and collaboration with parents demonstrates that character building is not positioned as an additional activity, but rather integrated into the daily learning process. This is consistent with the views of Agung et al (2023), Widiastuti & Hanif (2024), and Bararah (2024) who emphasize that character education should be integrated into the curriculum and learning practices to prepare students who are not only cognitively intelligent but also ethical, empathetic, and possess adequate social skills. The contextual approach employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through the 7 Habits of Great Children program also aligns with Sitepu's (2025) idea of the importance of learning based on students' real-life contexts to strengthen their identity and character.

On the other hand, the results of this study also indicate that the strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers attempt to address the challenges of character formation in elementary school students, particularly in the upper grades, which are often described as complex in various studies. Various studies highlight that teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of character education and the tendency to interpret character as merely procedural discipline are among the main obstacles to the implementation of effective character education (Hutapea, 2025; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2025). The findings of this study differ from these tendencies, because Islamic Religious Education teachers do not only emphasize formal rules, but also encourage the habituation of values through role models, dialogue, and positive reinforcement. However, inhibiting factors in the form of limited time for habituation and inconsistent support from some parents indicate that the structural challenges identified by previous studies have not been fully resolved, so that collaboration across elements (teachers, parents, and schools) remains an important agenda as suggested by Dini et al (2025), Mulyanti et al (2024), Syafrina et al (2025), and Urfa et al (2024).

The findings of this study also confirm the central role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in internalizing Islamic character values, as outlined by Al-Baihaqi et al (2024), Musthofa (2025), and Sari et al (2025). Strong role-modeling strategies, emotional closeness between teachers and students, and efforts by Islamic Religious Education teachers to present Islamic values in concrete activities such as Dhuha prayer, daily prayers, cooperation in sports, and reinforcement through the book 7 Habits of Great Children demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education teachers perform a dual function as both teachers and educators. This is in line with the findings of Ni'mah et al (2025) and Tholibin et al (2022) that teacher role models and positive behavioral habits have a significant impact on the internalization of moral values in students. In contrast to several studies highlighting the limited role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the digital age or during the pandemic, research by Rochim & Khayati (2023) shows that in the face-to-face context of elementary schools, Islamic Religious Education teachers can still play a powerful role as social and spiritual role models, especially when character strategies are structured.

The 7 Habits of Great Children concept implemented can also be positioned as a local adaptation of the 7 Habits framework widely used in modern character education. Consistent with Belinda & Halimah (2023), Muslem & Hayatina (2021), and Nawawi et al (2024), the results of this study demonstrate that the habits instilled—such as waking up early, praying on time, living a healthy life, a love of learning, positive social behavior, and sleeping regularly—are not merely slogans, but are practiced through routines, ongoing supervision, and evaluation. Parental

involvement in monitoring the 7 Habits of Great Children book supports Kowal's (2025) findings on the importance of the family's role in strengthening character education beginning in school. Thus, this study confirms that the concept of 7 habits is not merely a pedagogical discourse, but can be a comprehensive approach when supported by consistent teacher strategy design and active family participation.

However, this study also highlights the persistent gap between theory and practice, which has been widely discussed in the elementary education literature. Anggreni et al (2025), Nugroho & Darmawan (2024), and Sari & Yarza (2021) demonstrate that ideal learning theories and strategies are often difficult to implement in the classroom due to limited training, facilities, and sensitivity to local contexts. In the context, the study results show that Islamic Religious Education teachers successfully implemented Bandura's social learning theory and the principles of Islamic character building into practical practice, but still faced time constraints and varying family support. This suggests that successful implementation of the 7 Habits of Great Children program requires not only sound teacher strategies but also support from school policies, ongoing teacher capacity building, and synergy with national policies such as Strengthening Character Education (PPK) and the Pancasila Student Profile (Muslim, 2020; Sholichah, 2025). Thus, this study provides an important contribution in bridging the theory-practice gap through empirical evidence that Islamic value-based character education can be concretely operationalized in elementary schools through a combination of role models, habituation, positive reinforcement, and collaboration with parents.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study conducted, it can be concluded that the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in implementing the 7 Habits of Great Children are effective in fostering students' character development. These strategies include teacher role modelling, positive reinforcement, the integration of habituation values into PAI learning activities, and collaboration with parents. PAI teachers not only deliver religious concepts theoretically but also internalize them through consistent daily practices, such as congregational Dhuha prayer, morning exercise, habitual greetings, and continuous monitoring through the 7 Habits of Great Children student book. As a result, these strategies contribute significantly to the development of students' religious character, discipline, responsibility, and positive social behavior.

The successful implementation of the program is supported by teachers' commitment, strong emotional relationships between teachers and students, parental involvement, and systematic behavior monitoring. However, the program still faces challenges, particularly limited time for habituation activities at school and inconsistent parental support at home. The implications of this study indicate that habituation- and role-modelling-based PAI learning can serve as an effective model for strengthening Islamic character education in elementary schools. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening school-family collaboration to ensure the sustainability of character education beyond the classroom. Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of social learning theory in explaining the effectiveness of character education grounded in Islamic values.

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