

Nurturing the *Fitrah*: Managing the Integration of Montessori Pedagogy and Islamic Character Education

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the integration of Montessori teaching methods with Islamic character development from an educational management perspective. The study emphasizes how the planning, organization, implementation, and supervision processes support the integration of Montessori pedagogy with Islamic values in early childhood education. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving teachers, students, parents, and school leaders. The research findings indicate that the Montessori approach aligns with children's developmental stages by promoting experiential learning, independence, and self-discipline, which align with the Islamic concept of *fitrah* (natural nature). Islamic values such as *amanah* (responsibility), *istiqlal* (independence), *istiqamah* (consistency), and *ta'awun* (cooperation) are systematically integrated through structured school management, classroom routines, teacher supervision, and collaborative partnerships with parents. Supporting factors include competent educators, a well-managed learning environment, and institutional commitment to values-based education. Challenges include the limited number of Montessori-trained teachers and diverse family backgrounds. This research suggests that integrating Montessori pedagogy and Islamic values enhances the quality of early childhood education by fostering student character and independence, strengthening collaboration between teachers and parents, and providing a foundation for policy development and teacher training in values-based education at the kindergarten level.

Keywords: *Montessori, Educational Management, Early Childhood Education, Islamic Character*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti integrasi metode pengajaran Montessori dengan pengembangan karakter Islami dari perspektif manajemen pendidikan. Penelitian ini menekankan bagaimana proses perencanaan, pengorganisasian, implementasi, dan supervisi mendukung integrasi pedagogi Montessori dengan nilai-nilai Islam dalam pendidikan anak usia dini. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan guru, siswa, orang tua, serta pimpinan sekolah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan Montessori selaras dengan tahapan perkembangan anak dengan mempromosikan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, kemandirian, dan disiplin diri, yang sesuai dengan konsep *fitrah* dalam Islam. Nilai-nilai Islam seperti *amanah* (tanggung jawab), *istiqlal* (kemandirian), *istiqamah* (konsistensi), dan *ta'awun* (kerja sama)

diintegrasikan secara sistematis melalui manajemen sekolah yang terstruktur, rutinitas kelas, supervisi guru, dan kemitraan kolaboratif dengan orang tua. Faktor pendukung meliputi pendidik yang kompeten, lingkungan belajar yang terkelola dengan baik, serta komitmen institusional terhadap pendidikan berbasis nilai, sedangkan tantangannya mencakup keterbatasan guru terlatih Montessori dan latar belakang keluarga yang beragam. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bahwa integrasi pedagogi Montessori dan nilai Islami dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan anak usia dini dengan mengembangkan karakter dan kemandirian siswa, memperkuat kerja sama antara guru dan orang tua, serta menjadi dasar bagi pengembangan kebijakan dan pelatihan guru dalam pendidikan berbasis nilai di tingkat Taman Kanak-kanak.

Kunci: *Montessori, Manajemen Pendidikan, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Karakter Islami*

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INTRODUCTION

This study aims to highlight the importance of early childhood education that balances cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development while instilling spiritual and moral values (Agus et al., 2025; Ilyasin et al., 2025; Utamimah & Nur Aisyah, 2025). Education should not merely transfer knowledge but also shape children's character and behavior in accordance with their *fitrah* (natural disposition) (Belle & Chemen, 2025; Tohet et al., 2025). In many contexts, education prioritizes cognitive mastery, leaving moral and spiritual growth underdeveloped (Sain & Laval, 2024; Tohet & Nuraini, 2026). This imbalance may result in children developing intellectual skills without ethical awareness. The *Montessori* method (Laski & Wang, 2023; Leuwol et al., 2023; Macia-Gual & Domingo-Penafiel, 2020), emphasizing experiential learning and independence, aligns with children's natural development but requires integration with Islamic values to ensure learning is not merely technical but also fosters moral and spiritual integrity. Evidence indicates that harmonizing *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic principles can enhance early character formation, supporting independent, disciplined, and responsible learners. Therefore, this study is socially relevant, offering guidance for educational policies and practices that nurture children holistically, reflecting both their natural disposition and the ethical imperatives of Islamic teaching.

The problem underpinning this research is the insufficient integration of Islamic values within *Montessori* pedagogical practices in early childhood education institutions. Many schools adopt *Montessori* primarily from a pedagogical perspective, while systematic development of Islamic character values, such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *istiqamah* (consistency), and *ta'awun* (cooperation), remains limited. Consequently, children experience a high degree of autonomy and exploration but may not internalize moral and spiritual awareness effectively. Compounding this issue are the limited numbers of teachers trained in both *Montessori* and Islamic approaches, as well as diverse family backgrounds. These challenges create an urgent need for research that identifies managerial and pedagogical strategies to integrate Montessori methods with Islamic character education systematically. To address this problem, the study aims to develop a model that guides educators and school leaders in fostering holistic, value-based early childhood learning.

In practice, while *Montessori* is widely implemented as the core instructional framework, the integration of Islamic character values remains sporadic and incidental. Children are given autonomy to explore and learn independently, yet reinforcement of honesty, discipline, and responsibility is inconsistent. Teachers face difficulties aligning *Montessori* activities with Islamic value-based objectives. Additionally, supervision and parental involvement are often suboptimal, resulting in fragmented value internalization. Preliminary observations indicate that without structured management, Islamic values may be applied inconsistently, preventing comprehensive character development. This phenomenon underscores the need for research exploring managerial and pedagogical strategies to ensure the effective integration of *Montessori* principles with Islamic character education in early childhood settings, thereby promoting both intellectual and moral development.

Previous studies demonstrate the effectiveness of *Montessori* in fostering cognitive, moral, and spiritual development (Qadafi, 2023; Rizqi et al., 2024). The approach emphasizes experiential learning, independence, and environmental exploration, principles closely aligned with Islamic teachings on responsibility and ethics (Hermawan et al., 2025). However, most research focuses on pedagogical quality or theoretical frameworks, without systematically addressing how Islamic values can be internalized through school management practices. This creates a research gap: limited empirical studies investigate the integration of *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic character education within organized school processes, including planning, supervision, and evaluation. The present study aims to fill this gap, offering insights into managerial strategies that enable children to develop academically and morally in a coherent, structured manner.

Additional studies highlight how Islamic principles enhance the *Montessori* approach by embedding spiritual meaning within daily educational experiences (Ningsih et al., 2021; Mumtazah, 2018; Hasanah et al., 2024; Nusir et al., 2025). Practices such as classroom routines, role modeling, and habituation promote discipline, social cooperation, and responsibility. However, empirical investigations on managerial support and structured integration of these practices are scarce. Prior research predominantly addresses theoretical or isolated classroom interventions. Therefore, this study contributes by providing a model that combines pedagogical and managerial approaches, ensuring the sustainable internalization of Islamic values within *Montessori* early childhood education.

This research introduces novelty by focusing on the integration of *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic character education from an educational management perspective. The developed model addresses not only classroom practices but also planning, supervision, and evaluation processes, ensuring systematic internalization of values. It adopts a holistic approach, integrating cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual development. Furthermore, it maps real-world challenges, such as limited teacher training and diverse family backgrounds, providing both practical and theoretical contributions to a value-based, culturally relevant, and systematically managed early childhood education.

The core research problem is how to systematically integrate *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic character education to ensure balanced intellectual and

moral development. Preliminary evidence suggests that educational management encompassing planning, organizing, supervising, and evaluating is essential for successful integration. This study contributes by presenting a needs-based supervisory model for educators and school leaders. The model aims to enhance teaching effectiveness, facilitate consistent internalization of Islamic values, and promote holistic child development, including independence, responsibility, and moral awareness, from the earliest stages of education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method, which is considered the most suitable approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of integrating the Montessori method with the development of Islamic character among early childhood students. The qualitative descriptive approach enables researchers to examine social phenomena deeply and holistically within their natural context. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from participants' perspectives in a comprehensive, contextual manner. Similarly, Sugiyono explains that descriptive qualitative research is used to systematically, factually, and accurately describe and analyze phenomena, events, and behaviors (Sugiyono, 2022). In line with this, the qualitative approach emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social realities through natural settings, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This approach is particularly relevant to the present study, as it seeks to explore the interaction between Montessori principles and Islamic character values, both of which are intangible. In this study, the qualitative approach is also employed to explore the institutional management processes that support the integration of Montessori principles and Islamic character education.

The data collected in this research consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta, covering aspects such as the teaching and learning process, the integration of Islamic values within Montessori-based activities, and the roles of teachers and the learning environment in supporting character formation. The primary data sources included teachers, the school principal, students, and parents. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from various supporting materials, including the school's curriculum, Montessori learning modules, institutional reports, photographs, and relevant literature, including books and academic journals on Montessori education and Islamic character development. Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation allowed the researcher to examine Montessori implementation in daily classroom activities directly; interviews with the principal, teachers, and shadow teachers provided deeper insights into the integration of Islamic values; and documentation, including lesson plans and school archives, offered evidence of the practice. Together, these complementary methods ensured data triangulation, credibility, and a comprehensive foundation for subsequent analysis. Data collection also included institutional documents related to curriculum planning, role distribution, and evaluation reports to examine the managerial aspects of the integration process.

The data analysis in this study followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified information to focus on relevant aspects, particularly the integration of Montessori methods with Islamic character values. The data were then presented systematically in descriptive narratives, supported by tables or direct quotations when necessary to show relationships among emerging themes. The final step involved drawing conclusions and verifying results through continuous reflection and triangulation to ensure accuracy and credibility. This analytical process was iterative, occurring simultaneously with data collection to allow new insights to emerge naturally during the study. The analysis specifically examined how planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision were reflected in daily educational practices.

To maintain data validity and reliability, several verification techniques were used, including persistent observation, triangulation, and peer debriefing. The researcher observed classroom activities repeatedly to capture authentic interactions between teachers and students, ensuring the data accurately reflected real conditions. Triangulation strengthened findings by comparing information from various sources and methods, while peer discussions with academic colleagues and supervisors validated interpretations and enhanced objectivity. The research process proceeded through structured stages, pre-field preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing, allowing a clear, systematic understanding of how the Montessori method can be effectively integrated with Islamic character education in early childhood learning at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta, an early childhood education institution established in 2023 that adopts the Montessori approach to support holistic child development. The school has five teachers, including the principal, and three shadow teachers who assist children with special needs, serving 37 students aged 4 to 6 across three classes. Its classrooms are equipped with various Montessori learning areas, including practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language, and cultural zones, as well as an Islamic corner with prayer tools, Islamic books, and daily prayer posters. Founded by Voni Merdhamia Syari, the school was established in response to her concern that conventional teaching methods often limit children's curiosity and enjoyment of learning. Inspired by Montessori philosophy, she developed an educational environment that encourages independence, responsibility, and experiential learning while integrating Islamic values. Guided by its vision to inspire lifelong learners who are empathetic, creative, and responsible, TK Acitya Montessori promotes balanced intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth, reflected in its motto "Play, Learn, Grow, Happy." The implementation of this vision is supported by structured institutional management to maintain the consistency of Montessori-based and Islamic character programs.

This section presents the research findings regarding the implementation of the Montessori method integrated with Islamic character values at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta. Data were obtained through interviews with the principal, teachers, and shadow teachers, as well as classroom observations and document analysis, including lesson plans, daily schedules, and photographs of learning activities. The findings are organized according to the research focus on children aged 4 to 6 years and the development of Islamic character values, namely independence, honesty, discipline, responsibility (amanah), compassion, and mutual help (ta'awun). This reflects the actuating function of management, in which planned programs are operationalized through coordinated instructional practices and value habituation.

Table 1. Integration of Montessori Principles with the Prophet's Educational Approach

Montessori Principle	Example of Montessori Practice	Prophet's Educational Principle	Example from the Prophet's Teaching	Integration Example in TK Acitya Montessori
Freedom of choice and movement	Children choose activities based on interest	Respecting children's natural expression	The Prophet allowed Hasan and Husain to play on his back during prayer (Bukhari)	Children choose Montessori materials freely within Islamic boundaries
Independence	Pouring water, folding cloth, tidying up	Assigning tasks based on capability	The Prophet asked Ibn Abbas to bring him water for ablution	Children are given simple responsibilities such as leading prayers
Concrete to abstract	Using number rods before learning symbols	Teaching from tangible to abstract	The Prophet drew a line on the ground to explain the right path (Ahmad)	Teachers use concrete materials while integrating prayer and reflection
Simple to complex	Learning to button before tying shoes	Gradual instruction based on readiness	The Prophet commanded prayer at age seven and discipline at ten (Abu Dawud)	Tasks are given progressively with emphasis on Islamic manners
Sensitive periods	Ages 3-6 are sensitive to order and language	Considering developmental stages	The Prophet taught table manners early: "Say the name of Allah..." (Bukhari)	Teachers build prayer and greeting habits during sensitive phases
Prepared environment	Organized, accessible learning materials	Creating a moral and social environment	The Prophet modeled daily etiquette at home	Classrooms include Islamic corners with prayer materials and posters

Integrating the Montessori Method with Islamic Character Education

This study underscores the critical role of the *Montessori* method in supporting the internalization of Islamic character values in early childhood education. According to the principal, *Montessori* education is particularly effective for children aged 0-7 years, as it emphasizes concrete, hands-on learning experiences that correspond with children's developmental stages. Although originally developed by a non-Muslim educator, the principles of *Montessori* are

considered compatible with Islamic teachings. The concept of *freedom within limits* reflects the Islamic balance between individual autonomy and obedience to divine guidance. At the same time, *Montessori's* emphasis on children's innate potential resonates with the Islamic notion of *fitrah*. Structured and purposeful application of these principles ensures that children develop holistically, fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual growth simultaneously.

Classroom observations indicated that practical life activities, such as pouring water, folding clothes, cleaning tables, and organizing learning materials, effectively promoted independence, patience, responsibility, and self-discipline. Islamic practices—including greetings, reciting daily prayers, and performing *shalat dhuha*—were naturally embedded in daily routines. Teachers acted as role models, consistently reinforcing Islamic values through storytelling, reminders, and habituation exercises. As a result, children gradually internalized these values through repeated exposure and daily practice, rather than through direct instruction or coercion. The integration was carefully structured through systematic educational planning, embedding Islamic principles into classroom activities, environmental arrangements, and supervisory routines to ensure consistency and sustainability in character formation.

The implementation of *Montessori*-based Islamic character education involved establishing clear classroom routines that emphasized discipline, respect, and social responsibility. Students were guided to handle *Montessori* materials properly, return items to designated locations, and communicate politely with teachers and peers. Islamic values were reinforced through collective prayers, recitation of short *surahs*, moral storytelling, and habituation practices. The classroom environment supported integration by displaying Islamic learning materials, such as prayer posters, Arabic letters, storybooks, and prayer equipment, alongside *Montessori* materials. Teachers facilitated learning while modeling moral and spiritual behaviors, balancing independence with guidance, ensuring that children simultaneously acquired academic skills and moral virtues.

Documentation of daily learning activities confirmed that academic and spiritual development were intertwined, and that consistent reinforcement enabled children to develop both intellectual and character competencies. The findings demonstrate that systematic integration of *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic character education requires careful planning, organized classroom management, continuous supervision, and collaboration between teachers and parents. Without such structured management, the internalization of Islamic values may become incidental or fragmented, limiting the holistic development of young learners. This study contributes to early childhood education by providing a model that harmonizes pedagogical strategies with spiritual guidance, offering practical insights for educators and administrators seeking to cultivate independent, responsible, and morally grounded children.

Overall, integrating *Montessori* principles with Islamic values provides a comprehensive framework for nurturing children's intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. By fostering independence, responsibility, discipline, and moral awareness in structured learning environments, this approach ensures that early childhood education is not only academically effective but also value-

oriented. The study highlights the urgency of systematically implementing integrated pedagogical models, emphasizing the role of educational management in maintaining consistency, promoting habitual internalization of values, and strengthening collaboration between school and family to support sustainable character development.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Integration Process

The third finding identifies several factors that both support and inhibit the implementation of Montessori-based Islamic character education. Supporting factors included ongoing teacher training and collaboration with the Montessori School Community Indonesia, which enhanced educators' competence in applying Montessori principles while integrating Islamic values into classroom activities. Collaboration with local mosques and active parental involvement further reinforced the continuity of Islamic education beyond school hours, ensuring consistent value internalization across environments.

Additionally, a well-prepared classroom environment played a crucial role in the program's success. The availability of organized learning materials, dedicated Islamic learning corners, and structured daily routines created a conducive atmosphere for both academic and character development. These arrangements allowed students to engage in learning activities independently while simultaneously practicing Islamic behaviors, such as *shalat dhuha* and moral habituation exercises, in a natural and consistent way.

Despite these supports, several inhibiting factors were observed. Variations in parenting styles between home and school occasionally led to inconsistencies in children's behavior and discipline. Some children received limited reinforcement of Islamic values at home, which affected the continuity of character habituation. Teachers also reported challenges associated with children's short attention spans and varying developmental abilities. Furthermore, the limited number of educators with formal *Montessori* training and the relatively high cost of *Montessori* learning materials posed institutional constraints.

To address these challenges, the school implemented parenting workshops, distributed educational guidebooks, and maintained active communication with parents to align home and school practices. Regular teacher development programs, along with collaborative discussions among educators, were also conducted to enhance learning effectiveness and character integration.

Overall, the findings indicate that TK Acitya Montessori has successfully integrated *Montessori* pedagogy with Islamic character education through structured learning activities, teacher modeling, prepared learning environments, and institutional collaboration. This integrated approach fosters holistic development, ensuring that students acquire both academic skills and moral-spiritual values coherently and sustainably.

Islamic Educational Management in the Integration Process

In addition to the learning implementation and supporting factors discussed previously, the successful integration of the Montessori method and Islamic character education at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta is also influenced by the application of systematic Islamic educational management. The findings

show that the integration process not occurs only in classroom learning activities but is also supported by educational management functions comprising planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating. Therefore, the internalization of Islamic values is carried out in a structured and sustainable manner.

At the planning stage, the school integrates Montessori principles and Islamic values into the curriculum, daily schedules, classroom rules, and habituation programs. Values such as discipline, responsibility (*amanah*), independence, and compassion are embedded in activities that have been systematically designed. This indicates that Islamic character education becomes an essential part of the overall school program.

The organizing function is evident in the clear division of responsibilities among the principal, classroom teachers, and shadow teachers to support both the learning process and children's character development. Each educator has specific roles in guiding children's academic, social, and spiritual development. Teachers function not only as learning facilitators but also as role models in applying Islamic values within the school environment.

At the implementation stage, Montessori learning activities are integrated with Islamic practices such as greetings, daily prayers, *shalat dhuha*, and Islamic storytelling. The classroom environment is also prepared to support children's independence while simultaneously developing their moral and spiritual awareness. Through consistent daily habituation, children learn to apply Islamic values naturally in their everyday activities.

Furthermore, the supervision and evaluation functions are conducted continuously through observations of children's academic progress and behavior, active communication with parents, and regular evaluations among educators. This supervision aims to ensure that the internalization of Islamic values is consistently maintained both at school and at home. Evaluation is also used as a reflective process to improve learning quality and strengthen the effectiveness of the integration program.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the successful integration of the Montessori method and Islamic character education at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta depends not only on classroom teaching strategies but also on the implementation of effective, structured Islamic educational management. Through systematic management, the school creates an educational environment that supports children's intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual development in a balanced manner.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that integrating the *Montessori* method with Islamic character education at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta effectively supports children's holistic development across cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. The *Montessori* approach enables children to engage in independent learning through concrete experiences, while Islamic values are internalized via habituation, teacher modeling, and daily religious practices. This integration demonstrates that *Montessori* education can be harmonized with

Islamic teachings in early childhood education, providing a foundation for both academic and moral development.

The first finding highlights the crucial role of the *Montessori* method in instilling Islamic values. Principles such as freedom within limits, independence, and experiential learning closely align with the Islamic concept of *fitrah*, recognizing children as individuals with innate potential to be properly guided. Practical life activities—including pouring water, organizing learning materials, and cleaning the classroom—develop discipline, responsibility, and independence, supporting previous research by Kurniati et al. (2022). Likewise, Qadafi (2023) emphasized that student-centered *Montessori* learning contributes to moral and religious development. Observations at TK Acitya Montessori confirm that Islamic values, such as daily prayers, greetings, and *shalat dhuha*, are naturally integrated into classroom routines, supporting the findings of Rizqi et al. (2024) and Hermawan et al. (2025). Additionally, Misliani (2025) found that combining *Montessori* principles with religious learning improves early childhood education by balancing intellectual and spiritual growth.

The second finding focuses on the implementation of *Montessori*-based Islamic character education through habituation and teacher role modeling. Teachers serve as both facilitators and moral exemplars, guiding students in polite interaction, helping peers, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and managing learning materials. These activities reflect Islamic character values such as discipline, compassion, cooperation, and *amanah* (responsibility), consistent with Ningsih et al. (2021). Furthermore, Mumtazah (2018) noted that *Montessori* learning areas, including practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language, and culture, can effectively integrate Islamic education. Hasanah et al. (2024) emphasized that *Montessori* supports creativity, individuality, and exploration while maintaining spiritual guidance, and Nusir et al. (2025) highlighted that combining *Montessori* with Islamic practices enhances social-emotional development, including patience, orderliness, readiness for worship, and positive social interaction.

The third finding identifies supporting and inhibiting factors in the integration process. Supporting factors include teacher competence, prepared learning environments, parental involvement, and collaboration with *Montessori* communities. Challenges comprise the limited number of formally trained *Montessori* educators, inconsistent parenting styles, and children's short attention spans. These results align with Nisa (2021), who noted that Islamic *Montessori* education is effective yet constrained by resource limitations and teacher supervision, and with Abidah et al. (2021), who emphasized school-parent collaboration in sustaining value-based education.

The success of this integration is strongly influenced by effective educational management (Hidayati et al., 2025; Kriswanto et al., 2024; Oyeniran et al., 2024). Planning involves embedding Islamic values into curriculum structures, daily schedules, classroom rules, and habituation programs to ensure that academic and spiritual development occur simultaneously. Organizing entails clear role distribution among principals, classroom teachers, and shadow teachers, ensuring effective coordination and consistency in the internalization of values.

Implementation is supported by daily classroom routines, prepared learning environments, and teacher modeling, incorporating Islamic practices naturally into *Montessori* activities. Continuous supervision and evaluation—including classroom observation, developmental assessment, teacher reflection, and parent communication—ensure the program's sustainability and effectiveness.

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature by demonstrating that integrating *Montessori* pedagogy and Islamic character education can be systematically managed through planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating. Unlike prior research, which focused primarily on classroom practices or theoretical frameworks, this study provides empirical evidence on the role of educational management in sustaining holistic value-based learning. It offers practical guidance for educators and school leaders in harmonizing pedagogical methods with religious education, ensuring that children's intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual growth is developed coherently and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the integration of the *Montessori* method with Islamic character education at TK Acitya Montessori Purwakarta effectively supports holistic early childhood development. The *Montessori* approach aligns with children's natural stages of development, emphasizing learning through concrete, experiential activities that foster independence, discipline, and responsibility. From an Islamic perspective, this method resonates with the concept of *fitrah*, fostering the natural development of moral and spiritual values. Daily routines and practical life exercises, combined with Islamic practices such as prayers, *shalat dhuha*, and greeting others with *salam*, cultivate moral awareness, spiritual discipline, and positive social behavior simultaneously, creating a comprehensive educational experience.

The success of this integration is reinforced by competent teachers who act as facilitators and moral role models, well-prepared classroom environments, and active parental collaboration. Challenges such as limited resources, high costs of *Montessori* materials, and variations in family backgrounds highlight the need for structured managerial support. Effective educational management—including curriculum planning, role distribution, implementation, supervision, and evaluation—ensures consistent internalization of values, transforming value-based learning from incidental practice into a sustainable, institutionalized model. This study contributes to the field of Islamic educational management by providing an empirical framework for integrating pedagogical methods with moral and spiritual development in early childhood.

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