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## Implementation of Religious Culture to Develop Children's Character in Early Childhood Education

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**ABSTRACT:** Efforts to develop children's character based on the application of religious culture are important for every early childhood education institution, but the implementation patterns are still limited. This research aims to describe the application of religious culture in early childhood education institutions in cultivating character to find application patterns. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a single case study design conducted at one of the early childhood education institutions in Banyumas, Indonesia. Data search was carried out using interviews, observation, and documentation. Analysis techniques used, data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion. The research results show that the application of religious culture has two main parts. The part related to the phasing pattern of cultivating religious values and the part related to various religious cultures and how to transmit them to children. The phasing pattern of cultivating religious values in children is carried out through introduction and training, which leads to habituation. Meanwhile, various religious cultures include cultures related to holy books, religious rituals, and places of worship. Religious culture is transmitted through the learning process and activities outside the learning process, including socialization, role modeling, and building communication between parents and institutions.

**Keywords:** religious culture, character, early childhood

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Character education aims to make every individual capable of developing universal ethical values and implementing them consistently (Nida, 2019), as well as making ethical decisions and acting based on them. These universal ethical values include religiosity, personality, social, and competitive attitudes (Anazifa, 2018). Therefore, character education must be preserved by every educational institution and not limited to religious-based educational institutions (Stozek, 2021). Even in the Indonesian context, various regulations have been issued by the government to support the implementation of character education, such as Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010, Government Regulation No. 87 of 2017, and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 20 of 2018. The patterns of implementing character education in Indonesia vary. Implementation patterns and models (Rosad, 2019; Sholeh, 2022; Susilo et al., 2022).

Various methods can be used to equip students with character in the educational sphere, one of which is building a religious culture in educational institutions. In this case, religious culture means a set of religious values mutually agreed upon in educational institutions that underlie the behavior, traditions, habits and symbols practiced by society, including those around schools (Maarif et al., 2020). This religious culture will be very helpful in implementing character education in schools because this cultural tradition promotes positive behavior towards students and can be realized through religious values, behavior, activities and religious symbols, supported by other educational components (Azmi, 2015).

The application of religious culture is necessary to support the cultivation of character in every child in an educational unit, especially in the era of the increasingly rapid development of information technology. This is because the impact of information technology developments is positive and negative (Burbules, 2019; Ratheeswari, 2018). Some examples of the negative impact on school-age children include causing quite a number of children to drop out of school and be imprisoned for violating state discipline and law (Apendi, 2021). Apart from that, children who use devices too often are susceptible to obesity, which can trigger an imbalance because children never do physical activities such as walking, running and other activities. Children can even experience physical decline, for example, visual problems such as eye fatigue, headaches/dizziness, nausea, and blurred vision (Yoenanto, 2022), or even more (Raza et al., 2020).

The application of religious culture to support the cultivation of character in children needs to be carried out by every educational institution, including early childhood education institutions. This is because cultivating children's character early is an important foundation for forming a civilized society with noble character (Adhar et al., 2018). Apart from that, this age is the golden age of a child, namely when the child has much excellent potential to be developed so that character cultivation can shape his personality (Purwanto, 2017). Even in neuroscientific studies, children aged 0 - 8 years are the most dominant development period of children's intelligence (Fadlilah, 2016).

Therefore, character cultivation in early childhood needs to be carried out by age development and implemented optimally.

However, there has not been much research regarding models or patterns of implementation of religious culture to support the growth and development of character in early childhood. Several studies regarding religious culture in early childhood institutions include: first, research conducted by Qurrata Akyuni (Akyuni, 2022). Where this research is based on literature study which directs the research focus to the role, variety and ways of realizing religious culture. Second, research conducted by Diyah Fitriyani (Fitriyani, 2016). Where the focus of his research is on planning, implementing and evaluating religious culture in daily activities at Muslimat NU 07 Bahrul Ulum Kendal Kindergarten. Third, research conducted by Octavia Rahmawati (Rahmawati, 2020). Where the focus of his research is on the role of teachers as models/role models, mentors and motivators in the implementation of religious culture in the *Taman Asuh Anak Muslim* Early Childhood educational institution (TAAM).

The description of the results of previous research shows that studies regarding patterns of implementation of religious culture to support the growth and development of character in early childhood are still limited in discussion. Therefore, this research focuses on patterns of applying religious culture to support character development in early childhood so that it is useful for developing research that has been carried out previously, as well as helping early childhood education institutions create a meaningful atmosphere for student development.

## 2 THEORETICAL STUDY

### 2.1 *Religious Culture*

Religious culture is composed of two words: culture and religion (Fatimah, 2021). Culture will always surround human life, according to where humans are. This is because culture, according to Clifford Geertz, is a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, an inherited system of conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which humans communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (Beyers, 2017). Therefore, culture will affect human life, and this influence can be seen in their daily attitudes and behavior (Syamaun, 2019). However, it must be understood that the impact of culture on human life is complex and sometimes difficult to explain verbally, even though the effects can be measured, assessed, or studied (Vermeulen, 2022).

As for religion, it is generally interpreted as a symbol system to build a strong, pervasive long-lasting, pervasive, and stable mood in humans, as well as being a motivation for humans to formulate a conception of the general order of human existence and use it in a natural way that the mood and This motivation appears or is reflected in daily realities (Beyers, 2017). Therefore, religion can influence and lead its followers because of the belief that religion is a guide and, at the same time, a reference in solving

various problems. Although, of course, this will depend on the individual and from where he obtained religious knowledge. However, as social beings, each individual cannot be separated from the social life surrounding him, affecting everyone's religious expression in the public sphere (Umar, 2020)

From these two terms, religious culture can be interpreted as a habit carried out by citizens, which is reflected in attitudes or behavior based on spiritual teachings (Zahrudin et al., 2021). This means that the attitude or behavior that appears to the individual reflects his belief in religion, or other words, that the actual manifestation of the manifestation of faith is in the attitudes and behavior of its adherents. Of course, this also means that every attitude and behavior of everyone will be faced with the attitudes and behavior of other individuals in the context of the environment in which the individual is located. This means that one's religious attitude will at least be influenced by the climate/cultural context of the community.

This religious culture at least includes the following, among others (Estivalèzes, 2017):

First, attitudes and behavior towards the Scriptures. In this case, the scriptures are interpreted as human life guidelines so that functional aspects of us are needed in cultivating such attitudes and behaviors. In religion, the scriptures have a significant influence on people's lives. For example, in the context of Muslims, the holy book has a fundamental role and function in life through various applications that can be done (Syukran, 2019). In addition, the sacred text (Al-Qur'an) is considered to give birth to behavior in the social tradition of the community, so its meaning gives birth to social interpretation, where the understanding and purpose of the Qur'an is then called "Living Qur'an" (Abshor, 2019). The same goes for other religious people (Angraeni, 2020; Dolorosa, 2021; Mutawakkil, 2022)

Second, attitudes and behaviors related to religious teachings and rituals, including the celebration of religious holidays. Practices have become an inseparable part of the existence of every individual and community group, so in everyday life, certain rituals and ceremonies dominate human life (Rumahuru, 2018). And ways in religion are among the links between religious beliefs and practices (Segal, 1980). In the context of Muslims, rites are all forms of spiritual practice, either in religious behavior or ceremonies whose implementation has been arranged in such a way as a form of worship, service, submission, and expression. Gratitude is born from a servant to his Lord (Ulya, 2013). This is done to realize his teachings and live a religious life towards piety and piety so that the ritual has a large enough impact in coloring various aspects, patterns of life, and human character (Abdurohim et al., 2021).

Third, attitudes and behaviors related to places of worship and religious institutions. Places of worship play an important role in people's lives. This place of worship, for example, a mosque in Islam, is not only a means of carrying out religious rituals but more broadly. At least the functions of this mosque include a place to perform congregational prayers (Rifa'i, 2016), a place for deliberation, a center for social activities, a center for

education, training, and da'wah (Amelia, 2021; Nurrahman, 2023). This function shows that the place of worship (Mosque) is the central point of community activities in the context of Islam. So, its role and function are essential in supporting the development of culture in society.

As for how to transmit religious and cultural values, at least it refers to the processes/stages of cultural transmission in general, which can be done in the following ways (Mardiyati, 2014; Nur, 2022): 1) through education and learning. All forms of spiritual and material culture in the form of a system of ideas, ideas, norms, patterned activities, and objects made by humans are packaged in subjects and curricula that are arranged and given systematically. 2) through the enculturation process. In other words, in this enculturation process, an individual learns and adapts his mind and behavior to the customs, a system of norms, and rules that exist in his culture. The habit of raising and raising children in repressive ways may tend to increase the growth of an obedient personality, in other cultures, the practice of growing and caring for children is permissive. It seems to facilitate the formation of the opposite character, a free and more confident personality. 3) through the socialization process. The socialization process is closely related to the cultural learning process about the social system. In this process, an individual from childhood to adulthood learns various patterns of action in interaction with all those around him who occupy different social statuses and roles in everyday life.

The stages of cultural transmission, in general, cannot be implemented optimally without a planning process, especially for an educational unit. This is because, with a planning process, culture becomes easier to transmit (Sunandar, 2020), likewise for early childhood education institutions. Understanding these three stages/processes in relation to cultivating religiosity for everyone will make it easier to implement them according to the existing context.

## 2.2 *Character Building*

The importance of character education is increasingly visible in everyday life, not only in the individual sphere but also in society. The various character values that need to be instilled in students include religious character, honesty, discipline, cleanliness and health, tolerance, work ethic, and a culture of nationalism (Marini, 2017). In addition, it can also be described as including 1) love of God and all of His creation, 2) independence and responsibility, 3) honesty and trustworthiness, wisdom, 4) respect and courtesy, 5) generous, helpful, and cooperation, 5 ) Confident, Creative, and Hardworking, 7) Leadership and Justice, 8) Kind and Humble, 9) Tolerance and Peace and Unity (Isnaini, 2013). Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, at least strengthening character education is carried out by applying Pancasila values, especially including religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of the homeland, respect, achievement, communicative, love of peace, likes to read, cares about the environment, cares about society, and is responsible (Hendarman, 2018; Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2018). However, at

least the variety of character values that exist shows that one complements the other, or some are general, but some are detailed.

What needs to be considered in instilling character in students is related to ways or methods that can be taken. At least related to the technique or practice within the scope of educational institutions, it includes: providing examples, intervening, providing habituation, and providing reinforcement (Apino, 2018). Exemplary, in this case, means setting an example/becoming an example, among others, in terms of obedience in carrying out religious teachings, getting in and out of class on time, providing opportunities for students to ask questions, and praising students who ask or answer teacher questions, keep what is promised, picking up trash scattered on the floor (Jacobus, 2017). While habituation means ideas that are actualized in actions, actions that are done repeatedly will become a habit, and habits that are carried out repeatedly/ continuously will form a character. This means that habituation contains experiences that are practiced often and constantly. Character planting must be used and practiced frequently to become a habit and form the desired character. Habituation is one of the teaching methods that are considered effective (Mardiyati, 2014). The implementation of the intervention in the cultivation of the nature of students is also essential. Intervention, in this case, means the intervention of the participation of a teacher or educational institution in general in solving problems related to the characters being faced by students (Sari, 2018), including the existence of policies to provide rules about the nature to students. Strengthening character planting can be done by giving trial sourced from community activities, cultural products, and other potentials in the environment around students (Rachmadyanti, 2017).

Various methods can be used, of course, while still providing basic considerations related to the age and development of students. This means that providing role models and reinforcement cannot be the same for all levels of education. Such considerations must be made so that character education can run well and achieve the expected results. For example, in the context of early childhood education units, strengthening culture-based character education can be implemented through developing the governance of educational units to create a climate and environment that supports the growth and development and character of children, as well as focusing on habituation and the formation of a culture that represents values. The main priority for early childhood education units (Hasbi, 2020).

### 3 METHOD

This research is based on a field study with a qualitative descriptive method, with a case study design, which is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail, and in-depth about a program, event, and training, either at the individual level, a group of people, institutions, or organizations to gain in-depth and further knowledge about the event scientifically (Rahardjo, 2017). The design uses a single case study because it only focuses on a small number that is investigated in depth in a one-time span (Wahyuningsih, 2013), especially in this case, it is only focused on the implementation of religious culture

in fostering the character of students in early childhood educational institutions Al-Azkiya Banyumas Indonesia.

### 3.1 *Participant*

The participant in this case, is focused on all teachers and principals in the institution. The selection of subjects/informants is because every teacher and principal of the institution is directly involved in implementing religious culture in each student. So, in this case, all teachers are sampled in the study, of course, they will adjust to their respective portions according to their position in the institution. This study was carried out at one of Banyumas Indonesia's early childhood education facilities.

### 3.2 *Data Collection and Procedure*

The method used in collecting data using interviews with semi-structured techniques. Some of the main themes in the interview can be described as follows:

Table 1. The Main Themes of This Interview

Criteria	Indicator	Number of Questions
Religious Culture	Policy on religious culture	3
	Elements of religious culture	3
	How to cultivate religious values	3
	Problems in cultivating religious values	2
Character	Variety of Main Characters in Early Childhood	3
	How to Grow Character in Early Childhood	2
	Problems in growing character	3

The main themes of this interview were developed dynamically in the research process. The second method is observation, especially in implementing activities at the institution, both in and outside the learning process. In addition, the documentation method is also used as a support, especially related to documents supporting and outside the learning process. Including photographs of various activities at the institution during the research process.

### 3.3 *Data Analysis*

The data analysis technique uses theory from Milles and Huberman (Mailani, 2023): data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification. Data reduction is carried out by coding the existing data, especially in sorting and selecting data relevant to the research theme, especially regarding religious culture and the character of early childhood in the institution. Then the coding results are presented in several criteria, according to the research theme, both regarding religious culture and various characters in early childhood, and then looking for the connection between these multiple criteria. The results of the search for this connection then conclude the pattern/model of the implementation of religious culture in growing character in early childhood. For the validation data use triangulation (Rahmayati, 2022).

## 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 *Result*

The religious culture at the Al-Azkiya Early Childhood Education Institute is based on Islamic teachings because all teachers and students are Muslim. The Religious Culture in This Institution Has Three Main Objectives

#### 4.1.1.1 Introduce Religious Culture to Students

This is considered necessary so that children from an early age recognize the teachings of their religion and have knowledge and understanding, even if simply according to their age development, about the education of their faith. In addition, introducing, in this case, is also an effort to connect the initial knowledge they have at home with what is taught at the institution so that there is no confusion among children about their religious teachings. The introduction process starts from simple things, such as introducing Hijaiyah letters, daily prayers, and short letters in the Qur'an, to ritual worship.

#### 4.1.1.2 Train Students About Their Religious Teachings

Training, in this case, is intended so that children have practical abilities in carrying out their spiritual teachings and acting and behave by religious teachings. Of course, this is also adjusted to the age and development of the students. Various training is provided at this institution, ranging from activities related to religious rituals to training in attitudes and behaviors through spiritual teachings, such as kindness, honesty, and courage.

#### 4.1.1.3 Habituation

In this case, habituation is considered necessary because carrying out religious rituals and behaving/behaving according to spiritual teachings will only be optimal if the learning and practice are repeated. Habituation, in this case, such as praying before and after education, praying when going to eat lunch, and getting used to saying excellent and honest. Because, after all, sometimes there are students who do something or say something in class, influenced by the environment in which the student lives. So sometimes there are students, who, at their age, should not understand the meaning, but because they are used to hearing in the environment where the child lives, they say words that are not polite and inappropriate at an early age. Therefore, with this habituation, children try to get used to speaking and acting according to their age and the teachings of their religion.

The three goals are in line with the vision and mission of the Al-Azkiya Early Childhood Education institution, namely: To be at the forefront in fostering a generation of believers, knowledge, and culture as well as with the mission, especially the first mission, namely fostering a generation that has firmness in faith and noble character so that every process in this institution is directed not only at the realm or aspects of knowledge but also attitudes and skills. The first keyword of the institution's vision, namely faith, is at the core of the whole process and the expected results of graduates of this institution.



Therefore, religious culture is the main entry point for achieving the vision and mission of the institution.

#### 4.1.2 *The Various Religious Cultures and How to Transmit Them to Students*

The results of research on religious culture in learning can be seen briefly in table 2, and the description will be explained in the narrative information that follows.

Table 2. The Religious Culture in Learning

Related Scriptures	Religious Culture in Learning	
	Related to Rituals	Related to Places of Worship
Introducing the Qur'an	Introduce and practice the ritual of purification, especially ablution.	Introducing the Mosque
Introducing and practicing the pronunciation of Hijaiyah Letters	Introducing and practicing prayer	Introducing the function of the mosque other than for worship
Introducing and practicing Short Surahs in the Qur'an	Introducing fasting	
Introduce, train, and get used to reading prayers	Introducing the Tradition of Sacrifice Worship	
Introducing, training, and familiarizing behavior according to the Qur'an and Hadith	Teaching and practicing the Hajj rituals	

##### 4.1.2.1 Religious Culture Related to The Holy Book of The Qur'an

Building confidence in the scriptures begins with introducing the scriptures to students. This activity is divided into two main parts: the learning process and socialization activities. Learning activities is done by compiling a schedule and learning materials. For example, religious material activities are held explicitly on Wednesdays and Thursdays; 1) To introduce *Hijaiyah* (Arabic) letters, each student, when he comes to school in the morning, the child takes a card containing the *Hijaiyah* letter at random and mentions the letter in front of the teacher, if it is correct, it is given an appreciation in the form of praise. In contrast, if the student does not know, the teacher mentions the letter to the student. Then students are asked to repeat the mention of the letter three times, then the letter is taken home and at home so that it is pasted into a particular book. After that, the activity continued with writing *Hijaiyah* letters; for those who could write, students were asked to follow or imitate the teacher's writings, while if they could not, students were asked just to thicken the examples of *Hijaiyah* letters given by the teacher.

In addition to learning to recognize *Hijaiyah* letters through writing, students are also taught to introduce and mention *Hijaiyah* letters in Iqra; individually, students are introduced to hijaiyah letters (one student, one teacher), then repeated classically. Such activities are carried out with interludes in the form of singing and clapping by the rhythm and songs taught by the teacher, among others: the *Alif ba ta* song, and Pat the *Hijaiyah*. 2) Besides introducing *Hijaiyah* letters, students are also introduced to and trained to read daily prayers, including prayers for starting the study, eating, and parents. 3) Several short letters in the Qur'an are also taught, such as Surah al-*Ikhlas* and Surah An-*Naas*. 4) Even

students are introduced to Hadith, especially hadith, whose contents are related to students' daily lives.

As for the second central part, namely the socialization process, students are introduced to and taught that the Qur'an is the holy book of Muslims. This introduction is done at the beginning of learning before students are taught about daily prayers and hadith. In addition, there are posters within this institution, especially on the classroom walls, with the letter *Hijaiyah* affixed. There are even educational props that contain *Hijaiyah* letters. This is so that students are familiar with the *Hijaiyah* (Arabic) letters as the letters used in writing the Qur'an.

With the implementation of these two parts, students become accustomed to wanting to recite the Koran at home, participating in activities at the al-Qur'an educational place at home, and repeating prayer readings when at home, including when at school they are also accustomed to praying before eating or starting to study. This can be seen from the responses students give when the teacher asks. Some students spontaneously tell their religious activities to their teachers without being asked first.

#### 4.1.2.2 Religious Culture is Related to Religious Rituals, Including the Celebration of Religious Holidays

The way to build belief in religious traditions begins with introducing students to various religious rituals, especially rituals often encountered by students. This activity is divided into two main parts, learning and socialization. Implementation in education, for example, every Thursday, students are trained in religious rituals, starting with the material on ablution. In the first activity, students were introduced to and taught the theory of ablution. This theory is related to the daily life of students, such as the teacher saying that there are children who like to run around in the yard, then their feet are dirty and get unclean, so the way to clean them is by performing ablution. Furthermore, students are taught to pat ablution, then introduced to the body parts obligatory in ablution. Then the following week, students practice one by one or in threes through simple simulations, following the movements exemplified by the teacher—likewise, for prayer, fasting, and sacrifice/Hajj rituals. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were always Hajj rituals every year.

As for the second central part, namely the socialization process, students are introduced to and taught that there are certain rituals for Muslims. This introduction is carried out at the beginning of learning before students are taught about ablution, prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage/*Qurban*. In addition, during the fasting month, students are trained not to bring lunch, so during school activities (approximately two hours), students are introduced to fasting. However, this was not forceful because some students still brought their lunch. Even within this institution, especially in educational props, it contains several examples of rituals, such as posters for ablution and prayer movements.

With these two parts, students become accustomed to carrying out worship rituals at home, such as prayer, *Friday* prayer, *Sahur* practice, iftar and praying at the mosque. This

is evident from the responses given by students when asked by the teacher or even sometimes some students spontaneously tell their religious activities to their teachers without being asked first.

#### 4.1.2.3 Religious Culture Related to Places of Worship is Generally Carried Out in The Learning Process and Discussing Prayer

The activity of introducing and explaining the function of the mosque is described simply, such as how students behave when they are at the mosque. In addition, regarding the part of the mosque, students are also introduced to the fact that the mosque is not only used for prayer but can also be used as a place to study the Qur'an, reading the Qur'an. Besides explaining the mosque, students are also invited to get to know the mosque through college activities. Even posters/pictures of the mosque are placed on the school's walls.

Apart from learning and socializing, students are introduced to and taught religious culture through example and two-way communication with parents. Exemplary in this case is given by the teacher through several real examples to students such as when drinking while sitting, fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, doing the *Dhuha* prayer when arriving at school, setting an example in speaking and being polite, both to fellow teachers and to students (see in Table 3). As for two-way communication with parents, it is carried out through a guardian meeting of students by providing input and emphasis so that while at home, the religious culture taught at school is also followed up by parents. In the context of this two-way communication, the school also makes a liaison book with parents so that parents can understand what material or activities the child does while at school.

Table 3. Religious Culture in Other Activities

Religious culture outside the context of learning	
Internal Institutions	Institutions and their relationship with parents
The method such:	The Method such:
Drinking habits	Two-way communication
Introducing Ramadan Fasting	A student guardian is meeting Via link book
Introducing Duha Prayer	Through parent-institution social media
Get used to saying polite words	

Thus, the implementation of religious culture on character building for students was carried out at the Al-Azkie Early Childhood Education Institute. The implementation process can provide an overview of various religious cultures, how to transmit them to students, and their impact on student character formation.

## 4.2 Discussion

The implementation of religious culture on student character development at the Early Childhood Education Institution in Banyumas is carried out using the following pattern/model: *first*, placing the stages of civilizing religious values according to the location of early childhood development significantly grows character in participants' education. This is important because this religious culture should indeed be adapted to the development of students, even elementary school-aged children (Suyitno, 2018),

especially to cultivate character in early childhood (Asbari, 2022). At this age, a child is experiencing a period of rapid development from his various potentials (Suryana et al., 2022).

*Second*, the variety of religious cultures and the way of transmitting them are also adapted to the stage of early childhood development, both in the learning process and outside the learning process. The variety of religious culture, in this case, includes culture related to scriptures, religious rituals, and related to places of worship. This cultural diversity is a fundamental basis in every student's life. For example, they are related to research on religious rituals, especially regarding religious celebrations in early childhood conducted by Kari Krogstad in Norwegian early childhood education and care institutions (Krogstad, 2017). The method of transmitting it is adjusted to the development of students. This mode of transmission plays a vital role in the sustainability of a culture (Breen, 2016; Mathews; S.Arulsamy, 2020), including the influence of culture on early childhood (Alhosani, 2022).

The model/pattern of the results of this study, when compared with previous research that has relevance to the research theme, can be described as follows: 1) research on the application of religious culture in early childhood education institutions by doing it based on a literature study whose results show that its application can be made through several things, namely through the policies carried out by the principal, in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, activities outside the classroom, namely the habits of all school members on an ongoing basis (Akyuni, 2022). 2) research on the management of religious culture in character building in early childhood at TK Muslimat NU 07 Bahrul Ulum Kendal, where the research results show a planning, implementation, and evaluation process. The instilled religious culture includes greeting, shaking hands, maintaining the cleanliness of the body and the environment, praying before and after lessons, reading short letters before classes and before going home, and reading a driving prayer (Fitriyani, 2016). 3) research on the role of early childhood teachers in realizing a religious culture was carried out at the *Taman Asuh Anak Muslim* Early Childhood educational institution (TAAM), where the results of his research describe the role of the teacher as a model/role model, mentor, and motivator in the implementation of religious culture in the institution (Rahmawati, 2020).

By looking at several previous studies show that the results of this research have quite significant differences, especially regarding the patterns/models of implementing religious culture in early childhood to develop character. This is marked by the development of findings regarding the stages in cultivating religious values in children, which include introduction, training and habituation, especially when compared with the theory of internalizing a value, which includes value transformation, value transactions and the trans-internalization stage (Munif, 2017). Apart from that, various religious cultures are also emphasized, not just on noble moral values, but expanded to several parts, especially including culture in holy books, religious rituals, and places of worship. Meanwhile, the method of transmitting culture to students is carried out not solely by

relying on the role of the teacher as a role model but also in the learning process and outside the learning process, including connecting with parents as supporters of the success of cultivating religious values in developing character in early childhood. Furthermore, this at least has an impact on student character growth.

However, this research still has several limitations: the limited time of the study, so that it has not entirely revealed the variety of cultures that is implanted and the impact on the growth of the character of students, which requires a long and intensive time, due to the dynamic development of early childhood. In addition, there are limitations in confirming to students directly, so the tendency for interviews is only with teachers and principals at the institution. Even if the religious culture that is instilled in the institution in students is correlated with the religious culture that is instilled when they are at home by their parents/surrounding environment, whether there is confusion or rejection or what kind of acceptance model it is, this also has not been widely revealed in this study, even though this is also true. This is the essence of research on religious culture. Therefore, some of these limitations can be followed up with further studies.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The implementation of religious culture to foster character in children in the early childhood education institutions studied is divided into at least two main things: the first concern is the stages of cultivating religious values according to the child's stage of development, which is carried out through a process of introduction, training leading to habituation. The second concern is the variety of religious cultures and how to transmit them to children. In this case, the variety of religious cultures includes cultures related to holy books, religious rituals, and places of worship. The transmission is through the learning process and activities outside the learning process, including socialization, example, and the building of intense two-way communication between parents and the school. Through these two main things, we can at least provide provisions to strengthen the character of every child in early childhood education institutions.

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