

Strengthening Spiritual Character through Tauhid-Based Learning in Integrated Islamic Kindergarten

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Abstract

Tauhid-based education plays a crucial role in shaping the spiritual character of young children. This study aims to analyze the implementation of tauhid learning and its influence on the development of children's spiritual character at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palopo City. A qualitative case study approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of tauhid-oriented educational practices within an integrated Islamic school environment. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, involving the principal, teachers, staff, and group B children (aged 5–6 years) as research subjects. The findings reveal that tauhid learning is implemented in a structured manner through thematic approaches and daily spiritual activities such as collective prayer, Dhuha prayer, morning dhikr, and the introduction of Asmaul Husna. Teachers serve as role models in spirituality and behavior, functioning as direct media for instilling tauhid values. The formation of children's spiritual character is further supported by a religious school environment and active parental involvement through parenting programs. These results affirm that the implementation of tauhid learning significantly contributes to building the foundation of faith and spiritual character in early childhood.

Keywords: Tauhid Analysis, Integrated Islamic School Early Childhood Education

Abstrak

Pembelajaran tauhid pada anak usia dini memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter spiritual sejak dini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pembelajaran tauhid dan pengaruhnya terhadap pembentukan karakter spiritual anak di TK Islam Terpadu Waladun Shalih, Kota Palopo. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, guna memperoleh pemahaman mendalam tentang praktik pendidikan berbasis tauhid di lingkungan sekolah Islam terpadu. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi, dengan subjek penelitian terdiri dari kepala sekolah, guru, karyawan, dan anak-anak kelompok B (usia 5–6 tahun). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran tauhid diterapkan secara terstruktur melalui pendekatan tematik dan kegiatan spiritual harian, seperti doa bersama, salat Dhuha, dzikir pagi, dan pengenalan Asmaul Husna. Keteladanan guru menjadi media utama dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai tauhid, yang diperkuat oleh lingkungan sekolah yang religius dan keterlibatan aktif orang tua melalui program parenting. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran tauhid berkontribusi signifikan dalam membentuk fondasi keimanan dan karakter spiritual anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Tauhid, Sekolah Islam Terpadu, PAUD

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science and technology in the digital era offers many conveniences, but also poses complex challenges for early childhood development (Ruggiero & Mong, 2015; Rusady et al., 2025; Saleha et al., 2022). The increasing accessibility of smartphones and the internet exposes children to various types of content, often without sufficient supervision or content filtering mechanisms (Amalina et al., 2024; Warmansyah et al., 2022; Yulia et al., 2025). This condition raises concern regarding the moral and spiritual formation of young children, especially when technological engagement outweighs spiritual education during their formative years.

In this context, the role of parents and educators is crucial in guiding children and building a strong spiritual foundation through early religious education (Imara et al., 2024; Qistina & Khadijah, 2025; Warmansyah et al., 2023). A central element of Islamic education is the teaching of tauhid the doctrine of the oneness of God which serves as the core of all Islamic teachings. Tauhid not only provides a theological framework but also shapes an individual's moral compass and worldview (Asbar & Setiawan, 2022; Hendayani, 2019; Khodarashih et al., 2025). The early years are a golden period for instilling foundational values, including religious awareness and belief systems that will shape the child's character into adulthood.

Tauhid-based education aligns closely with the concept of fitrah, the innate disposition of every human being to recognize and submit to the Creator. Fitrah implies an inherent tendency towards goodness, morality, and divine obedience, making early childhood a critical stage to nurture this disposition (Yusrina, 2021). According to Hasnawati (2019), family plays a vital role in shaping Islamic values during early childhood, as character, personality, and identity begin forming from a very young age.

However, challenges persist in the actual implementation of spiritual education for early childhood. Many parents struggle to integrate character-building activities that match the child's developmental stage (Algazira et al., 2025; Suhada & Hanum, 2025; Warmansyah & Marwan, 2025). A lack of religious modeling and guidance often results in children lacking spiritual direction (Aulia & Mujahidah, 2021). Because young children often imitate observed behavior, the modeling of tauhid values by adults both in families and schools is essential (Wahyuni & Putra, 2020). In the school setting, tauhid-based learning involves structured and thematic approaches that integrate spiritual practices into daily learning experiences, such as morning prayers, the recitation of Asmaul Husna, and reflective engagement with nature (Afendi et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2022; Munadi & Rahayu, 2019; Qistina & Khadijah, 2025). This approach not only transmits religious content but also fosters internalization of divine values in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the child's world.

Tauhid learning is not merely about doctrinal understanding but serves as a foundation for developing ethical and responsible individuals. As Liriwati & Armizi, (2021) emphasizes, tauhid fosters the conviction that Allah is One without partner, a belief that becomes a moral compass for daily living. From this perspective, the practice

of tauhid in education must be developmentally appropriate, involving experiential and interactive strategies that make divine attributes and values relatable to young children.

Several previous studies have investigated tauhid-based early childhood education. Lubis, (2019) found that spiritual values can be habituated through the 6S approach (smile, greet, salam, handshake, courtesy, and politeness) alongside prayer routines in TK Arrahman Nitu. Meanwhile, Sari et al., (2024) demonstrated that the integrative model of Tauhid Rububiyah, Uluhiyah, and Asma wa Sifat could be effectively embedded in early childhood curricula. Similarly, Maulidina et al. (2020) proposed a tauhid-oriented curriculum as a solution for developing strong Islamic character in children through structured planning and learning implementation.

These studies, while informative, tend to focus either on specific teaching strategies or curriculum components. Few have offered a holistic analysis of how tauhid learning is implemented in daily classroom practices and how it impacts the formation of children's spiritual character within the broader context of an integrated Islamic school. Additionally, most studies emphasize what is taught rather than how religious values are internalized by children at a behavioral and emotional level.

This study offers a novel perspective by combining classroom observation, stakeholder perspectives (teachers and parents), and analysis of daily tauhid practices within the integrated Islamic early childhood school setting. It aims to contribute a deeper understanding of how tauhid-based education can serve as a transformative tool in the spiritual development of children.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to describe the implementation of tauhid-based education and examine its implications for the spiritual character formation of early childhood learners in an integrated Islamic kindergarten.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of tauhid-based learning and its impact on the spiritual character development of early childhood learners. The case study method allowed the researcher to explore contextually how tauhid education is applied in the daily educational practices of an integrated Islamic school environment.

The research was conducted at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, located within the Hidayatullah Islamic Boarding School complex, at Jl. Dr. Ratulangi Km.9, Batu Walenrang Subdistrict, Telluwanua District, Palopo City. The study took place over a period of two months, from December 2024 to January 2025. This period included preliminary observation, main data collection, and data analysis and verification stages.

Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals considered knowledgeable, experienced, and directly involved in the tauhid-based learning process at the school. The subjects consisted of the principal, teachers, staff,

and 36 children from Group B, aged 5 to 6 years. The involvement of these informants aimed to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives related to the topic.

Data collection was carried out through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and school committee members to obtain information regarding the concept, implementation, and evaluation of tauhid learning. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner to examine interactions, learning activities, and children's behavior in daily school routines. Documentation involved collecting relevant documents such as lesson plans, children's development records, and visual documentation of classroom environments and learning activities.

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection. The analysis technique followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of four stages: data reduction, data categorization, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting essential information from interviews, observations, and documents. Data were categorized based on emerging themes such as teacher role modeling, habitual worship, and learning environment. The data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives, interview excerpts, and matrix tables. Conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and meanings from the presented data and applying triangulation across data sources to ensure the validity of the findings. With this approach and methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive, valid, and in-depth depiction of tauhid-based educational practices and their implications for the spiritual character development of early childhood learners at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of Tauhid-Based Learning at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten

Learning begins with intention and prayer

Tauhid-based learning is an educational approach that places divine values as the main foundation in every aspect of teaching and learning. At Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, this approach serves as the soul of daily educational activities. This study aims to explore how the concept of tauhid is implemented in learning activities, and how teachers understand and apply tauhid values in their interactions and the learning materials provided to the students. To obtain a comprehensive picture, the researcher conducted interviews with five teachers actively involved in the learning process. The following are the results of the field findings.

Learning Begins with Intention and Prayer

"The learning process always starts with intention and prayer, emphasizing values of faith. In thematic learning, children do not only learn about worldly phenomena but are directed to recognize the greatness of Allah. For example,

when observing nature, children are encouraged to say takbir and tahmid as expressions of gratitude and awe toward Allah's creations. This strengthens their spiritual awareness from an early age." (Interview [R1], AM, Foundation Head)

The statement above reflects the importance of an education system not only grounded in worldly knowledge but also in spiritual values rooted in religion. In thematic learning where multiple subjects are integrated through central themes emphasizing faith becomes highly relevant. Learning thus becomes not only a cognitive process but also a journey of character and spiritual formation. By encouraging children to say *takbir* and *tahmid* while observing nature, they are learning to appreciate and give thanks for the beauty of creation, reinforcing a spiritual perspective from a young age.

Integrating Themes with the Concept of Tauhid

"Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten applies an integrative thematic approach, where each theme is connected to the concept of tauhid. For example, when learning about 'Animals', children are introduced to the understanding that all living beings are creations of Allah and should be treated with compassion. Divine values are inserted in discussions, stories, and children's religious songs." (Interview [R2], FT, Principal)

This reflects a meaningful educational approach that shapes a child's character from an early age. Connecting themes with tauhid instills divine values in a natural and joyful way. When children learn about animals not just from a scientific standpoint but also as creations of Allah, they develop a spiritual appreciation alongside intellectual understanding. Storytelling and songs with spiritual messages further deepen this emotional and spiritual engagement, making the concept of tauhid feel familiar and embedded in daily life.

Modeling Islamic Behavior

"I always emphasize the importance of teachers modeling tauhid values. Young children imitate behavior easily. Therefore, we teachers consistently show obedience to Allah in our words and actions, such as mentioning Allah's name before starting activities, expressing gratitude, and demonstrating soft and gentle character." (Interview [R3], ND, Teacher)

Young children are in the mimicking phase, learning primarily through observation. Teachers modeling obedience to Allah through daily behavior becomes key in shaping the child's character and spiritual awareness. Saying *bismillah*, expressing *shukr*, and showing kindness exemplify tauhid in action. This modeling fosters a sense of safety and emotional connection, enabling spiritual values to be absorbed naturally.

Daily Worship Habits

“We, as teachers, make spiritual activities like congregational Duha prayer, short surah memorization, morning dhikr, and daily prayers a routine. Children are not only introduced to religious rituals but also explained their meanings and purposes, so they understand that all these are forms of servitude to Allah SWT.” (Interview [R4], TP, Teacher)

Activities like praying Duha, reciting short surahs, and daily dhikr serve not only as routine practices but also as spiritual development tools. Explaining the purpose of each activity ensures that children don't just perform rituals but internalize their spiritual meanings. This promotes awareness that every action, when done with sincere intention, is a form of worship—fostering sincerity, responsibility, and emotional maturity.

Islamic Classroom Environment

“The classroom atmosphere is designed to be religious and spiritual. Murattal (Qur'an recitation), images of Asmaul Husna, calligraphy, and decorations that support tauhid learning are displayed. These provide deep visual and auditory stimulation for children to internalize divine values naturally.” (Interview [R5], SA, Committee/Board Member)

Physical learning environments influence spiritual character building. Islamic elements in the classroom such as calligraphy, posters with Islamic advice, and the recitation of murattal provide an immersive environment where children are constantly exposed to reminders of Allah. These visuals and sounds reinforce values subconsciously and make spiritual growth an integral part of the school experience.

Implementation of Spiritual Character Formation

Spiritual character formation at Waladun Shalih Kindergarten is a core part of its educational mission. With teachers, principals, and the foundation involved, the integrated approach ensures children grow with a strong spiritual foundation that shapes their personality and worldview.

Habitual Use of Kalimat Thayyibah

“Spiritual character is built through habitual worship. Children are taught to pray at the beginning and end of activities, recognize the names of Allah (Asmaul Husna), and recite phrases like Subhanallah, Alhamdulillah, and Astaghfirullah in their daily lives. This helps build inner awareness and spirituality in children.” (Interview [R1], AM, Foundation Head)

Children quickly absorb repeated behaviors. Encouraging the use of *kalimat thayyibah* embeds tauhid in their language and response to daily events. Such habits, when reinforced consistently, create children who naturally express gratitude, awe, and repentance as part of their character.

Loving Approach through Exemplary Morals

“The loving approach is key to spiritual character building. Teachers develop emotional bonds with children, speak gently, and instill love for Allah and His Messenger. In certain situations, teachers initiate dialogues about feelings, sin, and good deeds using language appropriate for early childhood.”
(Interview [R2], FT, Principal)

Emotional connection is essential. Through kindness and gentle speech, children open up and receive spiritual messages more willingly. Dialogues about feelings, wrongdoings, and good deeds help children reflect spiritually and emotionally, fostering a loving relationship with Allah.

Clean Environment Reinforces Spiritual Awareness

“The school environment is designed to support spiritual development. A clean, comfortable, and orderly environment reflects Islamic values. Posters, Qur'anic verses, and tauhid phrases are displayed on classroom walls so children are constantly reminded of divine values.” (Interview [R3], ND, Teacher)

Cleanliness as part of faith is manifested in the physical school setting. Orderly and spiritually themed surroundings nurture both comfort and spiritual consciousness. Visual cues like tauhid posters reinforce faith in subtle yet powerful ways.

Spiritual Assessment Through Observation and Journals

“Spiritual character assessment is done through daily observation and child development journals. Teachers record how children respond to prayer, recite duas, or demonstrate patience and honesty. These evaluations guide further development.”
(Interview [R4], TP, Teacher)

Assessment is not based on tests, but on continuous observation and journaling. Tracking children's behavior during spiritual activities helps educators tailor guidance and support. This process-oriented assessment aligns with the developmental needs of young learners.

Collaboration with Parents for Spiritual Reinforcement at Home

“The collaboration between teachers and parents is essential. The school regularly conducts communication and parenting sessions to ensure that the spiritual values instilled at school are reinforced at home. Teachers encourage parents to set examples like praying together and reading the Qur'an at home.” (Interview [R5], SA, Committee/Board Member)

Parent teacher collaboration ensures consistency. Parenting sessions help align home routines with school spiritual practices, reducing contradictions and strengthening children's internalization of values. When children see the same behaviors modeled at home and school, they absorb the values more deeply and sustainably.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of tauhid-based learning at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten is carried out systematically to shape children's spiritual character from an early age. This aligns with the view that tauhid is the foundation of Islamic education, where children are guided to recognize Allah as the only Creator and the sole object of worship (Hambal, 2020). The habituation of intention, prayer, and the use of *kalimat thayyibah* such as *Subhanallah*, *Alhamdulillah*, and *Astaghfirullah* in daily routines exemplifies the internalization of divine values. This aligns with the findings of Lia & Khotimah (2020), who emphasize the importance of early habituation of Islamic values using approaches that emphasize warmth, manners, and repetition.

Such habituation also reflects the components of *Rububiyah* and *Uluhiyah*, namely, introducing children to the concept of Allah as the Sustainer and the One worthy of all worship, as explained in Tafsir Al-Jalalayn regarding Surah Luqman:13. It is further supported by the constructivist educational view, where learning is built through repeated meaningful interactions, in line with Piaget's philosophy adapted in Islamic education (Sari et al., 2024). Furthermore, the thematic-integrative learning model applied in the kindergarten does not only address worldly themes but relates all subject matter to divine principles (Hasnawati, 2019). For example, when learning about animals or nature, students are encouraged to connect these with the Creator, fulfilling the principles of *Rububiyah*, *Uluhiyah*, and *Asma' wa Sifat* in a comprehensive manner.

The role of teachers as spiritual models further enhances this learning process. Teachers who exemplify behavior such as mentioning Allah before activities, demonstrating patience, and being gentle in speech, serve as tangible reflections of Allah's attributes. This aligns with Samsudin et al., (2024) who emphasized the importance of embodying divine attributes in daily conduct. Children's tendency to imitate adults, especially in early childhood, highlights the urgency of consistent spiritual modeling in educational environments (Yusrina, 2021). In addition, the Islamic ambiance of the classroom with Qur'anic recitations, calligraphy, and tauhid-oriented decorations provides visual and auditory stimuli that reinforce spiritual awareness. This

reflects the experiential and multisensory approach that effectively supports emotional engagement and deep learning (Maulidina et al., 2020).

Assessment of children's spiritual character in the kindergarten is conducted through daily observation and documentation in developmental journals. This form of holistic assessment is consistent with the early childhood education paradigm which emphasizes process over product rather than relying on rote evaluation, teachers focus on children's attitudes, responses to religious practices, and daily habits. Importantly, this spiritual formation process is not confined to the school alone (Lubis, 2019). Collaboration between teachers and parents through regular parenting sessions helps ensure that tauhid-based values are consistently reinforced at home, thus strengthening the continuity of spiritual education. Wahyuni & Putra (2020) highlight the role of such synergy in creating consistent moral and religious development across learning environments.

This collaborative approach also reflects the prophetic tradition that faith (*iman*) is not only a matter of belief but is manifested through consistent practice, as narrated in Shahih Muslim (No. 94). By creating consistent exposure and reinforcement in both school and home settings, tauhid-based education becomes not merely instructional, but transformative. This is especially vital in addressing the identity challenges faced by Muslim children in the digital age, where early spiritual grounding, as emphasized by Diajeng & Mujahidah (2021), becomes a vital shield against moral confusion.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that tauhid-based learning at Waladun Shalih Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palopo City is implemented in a structured, consistent, and integrated manner within thematic learning. The entire process begins with prayer, intention, and reinforcement of faith values, introducing children to the greatness of Allah through observation of His creations. Teachers serve as role models in both attitude and behavior, enabling the internalization of divine values through daily interactions. The development of children's spiritual character is fostered through habituation of worship practices, affectionate interactions, and the creation of a supportive religious environment, including activities such as Dhuha prayer, morning dhikr, daily prayer memorization, and the introduction of Asmaul Husna. Spiritual development is assessed through regular observation and documentation, supported by active parental involvement via communication and parenting programs. Overall, the tauhid-based education applied in this institution plays a crucial role in building the foundation of children's faith and character, serving as an early safeguard against the negative influences of modern life.

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