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Integration of Demonstration and Peer Teaching in Shaping Religious Behavior in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT
Instilling the habit of worship from an early age requires concrete strategies that accommodate the pre-operational developmental phase of children. This study aims to describe in depth the application of a combination of demonstration and peer teaching methods in developing the habit of Dhuha prayer in early childhood. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers, and field documentation. The results show that the teacher demonstration method effectively provides visual anchoring for children regarding the accuracy of prayer movements and recitations. Meanwhile, the implementation of peer teaching in small groups successfully minimized the psychological barrier of fear of making mistakes, increased tutor confidence, and accelerated the internalization of children's prayer independence through a playful approach with peers. The main obstacle lay in the children's fluctuating focus, which was successfully addressed through micro-teaching techniques and positive reinforcement. The combination of these two methods is recommended as an interactive alternative strategy for developing religious and moral values in early childhood.
Keywords*: Demonstration Method, Peer Teaching, Dhuha Prayer, Early Childhood*

INTRODUCTION

Internalizing religious values through the practice of practical worship is a crucial pillar in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). One of the commonly applied curriculum contents in Kindergarten institutions is the practice of daily Dhuha prayer. However, pedagogical reality in the field often shows a disconnect between teacher teaching methods and the characteristics of child development (Sujiono;, 2009). Children aged 5–6 years are cognitively in the pre-operational phase (Piaget & Inhelder, 1972) which requires concrete visualization, and biologically have a limited attention span capacity of between 5 and 7

minutes (Darmawan et al., 2026). Therefore, teaching must be carried out in a fun way so that it is easily embedded in the child's soul (Hikmah & Intizam, 2026). The conventional approach dominated by one-way classical lecture methods triggers psychological boredom and alienates the role of education in educating children (Supariyah, 2023).

21st century learning demands a reorientation of the paradigm towards active learning or child-centered learning (Wardhani & Surtikanti, 2019). This concept can be manifested at the PAUD level by combining demonstration methods and peer teaching (peer tutoring). The demonstration method acts as a visual bridge that displays physical movement models in a valid and coherent manner (Hardianti et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of classical demonstrations is often reduced by the limited scope of teacher supervision regarding the unique development of each individual child in large classes (Mulyasa, 2012). The peer teaching method increases student involvement, children are more comfortable studying with friends who are relatively close in age and ability (Safitri & Rahmawati, 2023).

As an integrative solution, the peer teaching method was implemented to decentralize the teacher's role into small, dynamic groups. The peer tutoring approach utilizes Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) principle, where children will reach their potential developmental level more rapidly when interacting with and receiving sufficient assistance from peers or teachers (Hasanah et al., 2025). The element of social imitation that occurs among children not only transfers motor skills but also reduces children's psychological fear of making mistakes in front of authority figures (teachers) (Topping, 2015).

Although the effectiveness of demonstration and peer teaching methods has been widely recognized in general educational literature, previous studies tend to analyze these two methods separately and are predominantly oriented toward short-term quantitative outcomes. Qualitative analyses that dissect the transitional mechanism from vertical modeling (teacher) to horizontal mentoring (peers) in fostering early childhood worship autonomy remain severely limited particularly in explaining how peer interaction dynamics reduce children's psychological anxiety while managing their limited attention spans. Yet, the synergy between the teacher's visual

anchoring and peer scaffolding is key to shifting children's prayer practice from mere instructional compliance to internalized independence and consistency. Therefore, this descriptive qualitative study aims to comprehensively analyze the sociometric planning mechanisms, field integration processes, transformation of children's independence, and attention-barrier resolution strategies employed by educators in habituating Dhuha prayer among early childhood students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. This design is applied to explore, analyze, and describe naturally (naturalistic) about the reality of instruction without any manipulation of variables or laboratory conditioning (Craswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted at the Nidaul Hikmah Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, with research subjects consisting of 2 class teachers and 16 Group B students (age range 5–6 years). The selection of key informants from the student element who acted as peer teachers was carried out through a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria of having motor maturity (solid prayer movements), stable memorization of readings, and good interpersonal intelligence based on the teacher's daily assessment records.

Data were collected directly by the researcher as the main instrument (human instrument) through three techniques. First, Passive Participatory Observation where the researcher intensively observed the routine of practicing Dhuha prayer without intervening in the learning process, focusing on verbal-nonverbal interactions between tutors and group members. Second, Semi-structured Interviews were conducted with class teachers to explore theoretical perspectives, children's sociometric constraints, and classroom mitigation strategies. Third, Documentation Study in the form of analysis of the Daily Lesson Plan (RPPH), anecdotal records, and child development achievement sheets (BB, MB, BSH, BSB).

The data analysis process applied the interactive model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2013) which included three simultaneous activity flows: data reduction

(selecting and focusing raw data from the field), data presentation (compiling a descriptive narrative matrix), and drawing conclusions and verification. Data validity testing was conducted through a triangulation strategy of sources (teachers, documents, and children) and triangulation of data collection techniques to ensure the credibility of this qualitative research.

The selection of a descriptive qualitative design with a naturalistic approach aims not only to describe instructional realities as they are, but is also designed to address the theoretical gap regarding the application of interactive methods to the affective and psychomotor dimensions of early childhood education. Through the integration of teacher modeling as a visual foundation (based on Piaget's cognitive development theory) and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) bridged by peer teaching, this study goes beyond merely demonstrating the complementary functions of existing teaching methods. This approach builds an integrated pedagogical model that explains the psychosocial trajectory ranging from teacher modeling and small-group peer interaction to social imitation to reduce children's anxiety, increase self-confidence, and foster independent worship. Furthermore, utilizing the researcher as the primary instrument (*human instrument*), supported by source triangulation (teachers, children, and developmental record documents such as anecdotal notes and achievement sheets), this study is able to identify specific indicators that distinguish between temporary mechanical movement imitation and the genuine internalization of religious values in children aged 5–6 years."

DISCUSSION

A. Engineering Planning and Sociometric Mapping in Peer Teaching of Dhuha Prayer for Early Childhood

The success of integrating demonstration and peer teaching methods in cultivating the habit of Dhuha prayer in early childhood is largely determined by the quality of learning planning. In this context, planning is not simply understood as the administrative preparation of a Lesson Plan (RPPH) or Teaching Module, but also as a pedagogical

engineering process that considers the child's social, emotional, and religious development. Teachers need to understand that children aged 5–6 are in a developmental phase that is still heavily influenced by concrete experiences, imitation, emotional closeness, and social interactions with peers. Therefore, the selection of peer tutors cannot be done haphazardly based solely on academic ability or the accuracy of prayer movements, but must also consider the child's emotional maturity, communication skills, patience, and social acceptance within the group.

Research findings indicate that teachers conduct sociometric mapping before determining which children will act as peer tutors. This mapping is crucial because children's social relationships in the classroom are not always directly visible through general observation. Children who achieve Very Good Development (BSB) in religious values may not necessarily be able to mentor their peers if they tend to be dominant, easily angered, or poorly accepted by their peers. Conversely, children who are communicative, patient, and have positive relationships with their peers can be effective learning mediators. This aligns with the view that character education and religious values in early childhood must be built through a warm, safe, and consistent social atmosphere, not solely through verbal teacher instruction (Munawwarah et al., 2025; Utari et al., 2023).

Sociometric mapping also serves as a basis for reducing psychological barriers in learning to worship. Early childhood often feels awkward or afraid of making mistakes when having to practice prayer movements directly in front of a teacher. In such situations, peer tutoring can act as a psychological bridge because the relationship between children is more equal, intimate, and less stressful. Thus, peer teaching is not simply a strategy for assigning teacher tasks to more capable children, but rather a social learning strategy that positions peers as a source of learning support. This practice aligns with the principles of early childhood education, which emphasize direct experience, social interaction, and behavioral

development through meaningful activities (Filasofa et al., 2021; Utami & Tawandorloh, 2025).

From a developmental theory perspective, the teacher's strategy of pairing children in the BSB category with children in the Not Yet Developing (BB) or Beginning to Develop (MB) categories can be understood as a form of scaffolding. The more capable child acts as the one who provides initial assistance to a friend who still needs support. This assistance can take the form of movement examples, simple corrections, invitations to repeat, or verbal reinforcement. This process reflects the principle of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the distance between a child's actual ability when learning alone and their potential ability when receiving assistance from others who are more capable (Vygotskij & Cole, 1981). With peer tutors, children who are not yet able to perform prayer movements sequentially receive support closer to their own social world.

Furthermore, combining the visual model from teacher demonstration—rooted in Piaget's pre-operational cognitive development theory with ZPD-based social interaction from Vygotsky forms a coherent theoretical framework. This integration explains the developmental trajectory from internal cognitive-visual processing toward collaborative social reinforcement, going beyond merely serving a complementary function to build an integrated pedagogical model for reducing children's anxiety and facilitating the internalization of independent worship habits. To ensure that these behavioral shifts represent true value internalization rather than mere temporary mechanical imitation, this study relies on source triangulation (teachers, children, and developmental record documents such as anecdotal notes and achievement sheets) alongside strict passive participatory observation. Through this approach, claims regarding increased self-confidence, reduced psychological barriers, and independent Dhuha prayer habits in children aged 5–6 years possess a robust qualitative credibility foundation."

The selection of peer tutors needs to be linked to emotional intelligence. (Goleman, 1996) emphasized that emotional intelligence is related to the ability to recognize one's own emotions, manage them, understand others, and build social relationships. In the context of learning the Dhuha prayer, these skills are crucial because peer tutors are not only required to be able to perform the prayer movements correctly, but also to be able to guide their peers without teasing, forcing, or displaying superiority. Children with more stable emotional intelligence will be better able to guide their peers with simple language, pleasant expressions, and a non-pressuring attitude. Therefore, the success of peer teaching in early childhood depends heavily on the match between the child's religious-motor abilities and social-emotional maturity.

These findings demonstrate that teachers play a role as designers of learning environments, not simply as providers of instruction. Teachers organize learning pairs, determine group composition, observe social dynamics, and ensure that interactions between children remain positive. This role is crucial because religious instruction in early childhood aims not only to develop precise movements but also to instill the values of responsibility, caring, patience, and independence. Articles on the development of religious character in early childhood also emphasize the importance of collaboration, habituation, and a supportive social environment so that religious values do not remain mere knowledge but develop into concrete behaviors(Utari et al., 2023).

Thus, the tutor's sociometric mapping and planning design are methodological elements that determine the effectiveness of the integration of demonstration and peer teaching. The teacher's demonstration models the correct prayer movements, while the peer tutors reinforce the internalization process through close, natural, and communicative interactions. This strategy demonstrates that the habituation of Dhuha prayer in early childhood cannot be separated from the social design of the classroom. When teachers are able to select tutors appropriately, arrange study partners proportionally, and monitor the

learning process reflectively, worship practices not only develop in the psychomotor domain but also shape children's religious character, self-regulation, and interpersonal intelligence.

B. Implementation of Demonstrations and Peer Teaching in Practicing Prayer Habits in Early Childhood Children

The implementation of the Dhuha prayer learning method for early childhood demonstrates pedagogical synergy between the classical phase through teacher demonstrations and the group phase through peer tutoring. This synergy is important because early childhood learning is not effective if only verbal explanations of prayer procedures are received. Children at this age range more easily understand religious behavior through concrete examples, repetition, direct experience, and social interactions close to their lives (Hurlock, 2015). Therefore, teacher demonstrations serve as a visual and motor foundation, while peer tutoring serves as social reinforcement, helping children practice prayer movements in a more relaxed and communicative atmosphere.

In the first phase, the teacher demonstrates the complete prayer movements in front of the row. This stage is crucial because the prayer movements have a sequence, body position, and motor precision that must be directly observed by the child. Demonstrations allow children to see the relationship between speech, movement, body position, and the overall rhythm of worship. In the context of early childhood education, the demonstration method is effective because it provides a concrete learning experience, not just verbal abstraction. Research conducted by Susanti (2021) found that early childhood learning will be more effective when it involves direct experience, various senses, and repeated habituation so that information can be stored more firmly in the child's memory. The demonstration method makes it easier for students to understand the learning (Arlina et al., 2024).

The teacher's demonstration can also be understood through Bandura's social learning theory. Children learn by observing models, storing movement information,

imitating behaviors, and practicing them through observational processes (Bandura, 1977). When the teacher sequentially demonstrates the takbir, bowing, prostration, and sitting between the two prostrations, the children acquire behavioral patterns that can be reproduced in practice. This process demonstrates that learning to worship in early childhood emphasizes not only memorizing recitations but also the formation of motor patterns and religious habits through imitation. Thus, the teacher acts as the primary model, providing standards for correct prayer movements before the children enter the group practice phase.

From an educational neuroscience perspective, observing and imitating movements is linked to the nervous system, enabling children to understand the actions of others through observation. The concept of mirror neurons explains that when children see someone perform a certain action, their brains can activate representations of similar movements, facilitating the imitation process (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). In learning to pray, this is evident when children observe the hand positions during takbir or prostration, then attempt to reconstruct these movements in their own bodies. Therefore, teacher demonstrations are not merely an activity of showing movements, but also a process of developing children's visual-motor coordination patterns.

In the second phase, learning moves to small groups through peer tutoring. This transition has pedagogical significance because it can reduce children's psychological barriers. When children face a teacher directly, some may feel afraid of making mistakes, feel awkward, or worried about being reprimanded. Conversely, when children learn with peers, the learning atmosphere becomes more equal and resembles play. This condition makes children more willing to try, repeat, and accept correction. Findings by Utami & Tawandorloh,(2025) indicate that a play-based approach can support children's self-regulation because children learn through experiences that are fun, structured, and developmentally appropriate.

Peer tutors in Dhuha prayer instruction act as a bridge between the teacher's instructions and the child's experiences. The language used by peer tutors tends to be simpler, more spontaneous, and more relevant to the child's way of thinking. Phrases like, "Look, the right hand is above the left," demonstrate that the correction is not formal, but rather communicative and easily understood. This kind of language prevents the child being corrected from feeling embarrassed. Instead, they feel they are being helped by their peer. This reinforces the view that early childhood learning is more meaningful when it involves direct experience, quick responses, and safe social relationships.

The involvement of peer tutors also demonstrates that learning to pray impacts not only psychomotor skills but also socio-emotional ones. Tutored children learn to take responsibility, maintain precise movements, and assist their peers. Tutored children learn to accept direction, correct mistakes, and have the courage to try again. Thus, learning the Dhuha prayer through demonstrations and peer tutoring fosters two-pronged benefits. Tutored children receive assistance in understanding prayer movements, while tutored children gain leadership experience, empathy, and a strengthened self-concept.

These findings align with the concept of multisensory learning in early childhood religious education. Research by (Anggraheni & Ertanti, 2025; Darmawan et al., 2026) shows that integrating movement and multisensory experiences can enhance children's religious learning because it simultaneously engages the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. In the context of the Dhuha prayer, children not only memorize the sequence of movements but also experience the worship atmosphere, follow the group rhythm, and develop religious attitudes through repeated practice. This reinforces the position of habituating prayer as a process of internalizing values, not merely a mechanical exercise.

Furthermore, the success of the peer tutoring phase depends heavily on the teacher's responsiveness in monitoring group dynamics. Teachers must remain present as guides, observers, and providers of reinforcement to prevent peer tutoring from becoming a

dominant style among children (Muis et al., 2026) emphasize the importance of teacher responsive strategies in early childhood learning, particularly when teachers need to tailor assistance to the children's needs. In Dhuha prayer instruction, teacher responsiveness is evident through the way teachers provide direction when the group begins to lose focus, correct movement errors, and provide positive reinforcement to children who try.

Thus, the dynamic implementation of the demonstration and peer tutoring methods in the habit of Dhuha prayer demonstrates the existence of holistic learning. The teacher's demonstration provides the standard examples children need to understand the structure of prayer movements. The peer tutors create a more intimate, stress-free learning space that resembles play. The combination of the two makes religious learning more effective because children simultaneously gain visual models, motor skills, social correction, and emotional reinforcement. Therefore, the integration of demonstration and peer tutoring can be understood as a religious learning strategy appropriate to the developmental characteristics of early childhood.

C. Psychomotor, Affective, and Social Transformation of Children in the Habit of Dhuha Prayer

Descriptive analysis of child development shows that there is a leap in achievement that is not only limited to the motor (psychomotor) domain, but also extends to the social-emotional (affective) and understanding (cognitive) domains.

Table 1. Developmental Transformation Matrix in Dhuha Prayer Practice

Developmental Dimension	Pattern Before Method Implementation	Transformation Post Method Implementation	Theoretical Implications
Gross Motor Accuracy (Psychomotor)	Movements are unsynchronized; foot positioning during the sitting between two prostrations (*duduk di antara dua sujud*) is frequently inverted.	Prayer movements become precise, sequential, and aligned with the teacher's standard modeling.	Stimulation of sensory-motor coordination in early childhood (Suyadi, 2018).
Independence (Religious Affective)	Children remain passive, only moving when their hands are guided or when directly commanded by the teacher.	Children autonomously arrange their prayer mats and take their positions in the prayer row (*saf*) without strict instructions.	Formation of self-regulation from the golden age (Santrock, 2018).
Interpersonal Intelligence	High egocentrism; children tend to be indifferent to the difficulties faced by their peers.	Empathy grows, along with a willingness to help friends and a sense of social responsibility.	Reduction of egocentrism through social interaction (Piaget & Inhelder, 1972).

For children appointed as peer tutors, the positive impact is a strengthening of self-concept and self-esteem (Topping, 2015). They feel they have been given great trust by their teachers, which then triggers an internal responsibility to maintain their own memorization and the quality of their prayers so they can continue to be a good example for their peers.

This qualitative research honestly identified inherent barriers inherent in early childhood, namely emotional fluctuations and short attention spans. In several sessions, cases were found where peer tutors were distracted from playing with their peers, or minor conflicts arose because the tutors were too authoritarian, imitating adult styles.

To address these natural obstacles, educators employ two resolution strategies:

1. Time-Boxing (Micro-Time Limits): Teachers limit peer teaching activities to a very strict duration, namely 10 minutes for independent group practice, followed by 5 minutes of classical reinforcement. This aligns with retention theory, which states that early childhood has limited short-term memory capacity, making

learning more effective in short, focused, and meaningful sessions (Musdalifah, 2019).

2. Positive Reinforcement Contingency: The teacher constantly supervises the classroom and provides instant positive reinforcement. Groups that demonstrate good cooperation are given reward stickers or public praise in front of the class. This behaviorist approach (Skinner, 2005) has been shown to refocus distracted children on the original learning objective without the need for punitive measures.

CONCLUSION

The integration of demonstration and peer teaching methods in familiarizing early childhood with Dhuha prayer has been descriptively proven to provide an effective methodological update. The demonstration method succeeded in laying an accurate visual foundation for children's prayer motor structures, while the peer teaching method perfected it by providing a safe, anxiety-free and recreational social interaction space for children. Learning that brings alive interactions not only between teachers and children but also interactions between children and children. This synergy not only succeeded in increasing the accuracy of the psychomotor aspects of the Dhuha prayer in early childhood, but also simultaneously fostered leadership character, self-regulation and interpersonal intelligence in students..

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