Holistic-Integrative Program Management for Islamic Early Childhood Education: A Conceptual Synthesis for Strengthening Religious Character

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Abstract

Islamic Early Childhood Education has a strategic role in building the foundation of children's religious character from the earliest stages of development. However, strengthening religious character in PIAUD institutions is still often understood merely as routine religious activities and has not yet been managed as a planned, integrated, and sustainable program. This article aims to formulate a conceptual synthesis of holistic-integrative program management for Islamic Early Childhood Education in strengthening religious character. This study employs a qualitative approach using library research through a conceptual synthesis design. Data were obtained from academic literature, scholarly journal articles, policy documents, and previous research relevant to PIAUD program management, holistic-integrative early childhood education, Islamic early childhood education, and religious character education. Data analysis was conducted through reduction, thematic categorization, critical interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The findings indicate that holistic-integrative PIAUD program management is constructed through five main components: Islamic value orientation, integrated program planning, implementation of religious learning and habituation, sustainable family partnerships, and authentic assessment of children's character development. This article concludes that strengthening religious character in early childhood needs to be managed through a planned, consistent, participatory, and sustainable Islamic education ecosystem.

Keywords: program management; Islamic Early Childhood Education; holistic-integrative; religious character; conceptual synthesis.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD) plays an important role in fostering children's religious character through the integration of learning, care, protection, health, nutrition, and family involvement. In Indonesia, this objective is reinforced by the Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Development policy, which promotes comprehensive services addressing children's developmental needs. However, despite this policy framework, the implementation of holistic-integrative programs in Islamic early childhood institutions remains inconsistent. Religious character development is frequently limited to routine religious activities, such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and habituation, without being embedded within a systematic program management framework that integrates planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Consequently, the formation of children's religious character often depends on individual teacher practices rather than institutional management.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of holistic-integrative services, program evaluation, parental involvement, and character education in early childhood settings. Research has also demonstrated that Islamic values can be effectively strengthened through habituation, role modelling, and supportive learning environments. Nevertheless, these studies generally examine holistic-integrative services, Islamic education, and religious character as separate domains. While some focus on service implementation and others emphasize pedagogical strategies, little attention

has been given to how program management can systematically integrate these dimensions into a coherent institutional framework.

This limitation reveals three important research gaps. First, existing studies rarely position religious character as the central objective of holistic-integrative program management in Islamic Early Childhood Education. Second, the managerial functions of planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up remain underexplored in relation to religious character development. Third, no comprehensive conceptual model has integrated holistic-integrative services, Islamic educational values, family partnerships, and institutional management into a unified framework for strengthening children's religious character.

Therefore, this study proposes a conceptual model of holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management that integrates educational management principles, holistic-integrative services, and Islamic values into a single framework. Unlike previous studies that discuss these elements separately, the proposed model positions religious character as the primary orientation of program management while emphasizing the interdependence of institutional governance, learning processes, family engagement, and child development services.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How can a conceptual model of holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management be developed to strengthen children's religious character? The proposed framework is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the discourse on Islamic early childhood education management and practically by providing guidance for PIAUD institutions in designing integrated, value-oriented, and sustainable educational programs

METHOD/EXPERIMENT

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research through a conceptual synthesis design. This approach was selected because the article aims to formulate a conceptual construction of holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management for strengthening religious character, rather than to test hypotheses statistically or describe practices in one particular institution. Library research is considered relevant for examining, comparing, interpreting, and synthesizing various previous research findings, policy documents, and theories related to PAUD program management, holistic-integrative services, Islamic early childhood education, and religious character formation. In this context, literature review functions not merely as a summary of existing studies, but as a scientific method for constructing systematic and critical conceptual arguments (Grant & Booth, 2009; Snyder, 2019).

Contextually, this study was not conducted at a specific field site, but focused on the conceptual and policy context of Islamic Early Childhood Education implementation in Indonesia. The material object of the study consists of academic literature and official documents discussing holistic-integrative PAUD, PAUD program management, Islamic early childhood education, parental involvement, religious value habituation, and early childhood character education. The national context is significant because holistic-integrative early childhood development has a regulatory basis in Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 60 of 2013 and the technical guidelines for implementing Holistic-Integrative PAUD in PAUD units (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015; President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013). Thus, the context of this study lies in the synthesis of regulations, theories, and previous research findings relevant to strengthening religious character in PIAUD institutions.

The subjects of this library study are not individuals or human participants, but academic literature and policy documents that meet the criteria of relevance to the research focus. The main sources include scholarly journal articles, books or official policy documents, and verifiable previous research. The literature was selected based on its connection with four main focuses: early childhood education program management, the holistic-integrative PAUD approach, Islamic early childhood education, and the strengthening of religious character. Several core references include studies on the implementation of holistic-integrative PAUD services (Angkur, 2022), evaluation of holistic-

integrative PAUD programs (Lina et al., 2019), holistic-integrative Islamic early childhood education (Billah et al., 2023), management of religious character through habituation (Hasanah & Munastiwi, 2019), and character education management in PAUD (Kuncoro et al., 2025).

The data sources were determined purposively, namely by selecting literature based on its suitability to the research objectives and its contribution to conceptual synthesis. The inclusion criteria were: first, the source discusses one or more key variables of the study, namely program management, PAUD/PIAUD, holistic-integrative services, religious character education, or Islamic early childhood education; second, it comes from scholarly journal articles, official policy documents, or verifiable academic sources; third, it has conceptual relevance to strengthening religious character in early childhood; and fourth, it was prioritized if published within the last five to ten years, except for policy sources and foundational methodological references. The exclusion criteria included sources without clear academic identity, unverifiable sources, sources irrelevant to the study focus, or sources containing only popular opinion without scientific basis.

Data collection was carried out through identification, selection, critical reading, note-taking, and literature grouping. The first stage involved identifying sources relevant to the theme of holistic-integrative PIAUD program management. The second stage involved selecting literature based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The third stage involved critically reading each source to identify key concepts, important findings, theoretical approaches, and implications for strengthening religious character in early childhood. The fourth stage involved recording data in a literature matrix containing the author's name, year of publication, study focus, method, main findings, and relevance to this study. The fifth stage involved grouping the data into conceptual themes, such as Islamic value orientation, integrated program planning, implementation of holistic-integrative services, religious character habituation, family partnerships, authentic assessment, and program sustainability.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher as the key instrument in reading, interpreting, classifying, and synthesizing the literature. In addition, auxiliary instruments were used in the form of a literature review guide and a conceptual synthesis matrix. The literature review guide ensured that each source was examined based on the same aspects: research focus, main concept, approach or method, important findings, and contribution to the construction of the conceptual model. The synthesis matrix was used to map relationships among concepts, such as the relationship between program management and holistic-integrative PAUD services, between religious habituation and character strengthening, and between family involvement and the sustainability of children's religious values. These auxiliary instruments were intended to maintain analytical consistency and prevent the discussion from becoming merely descriptive.

Data analysis used qualitative content analysis and thematic-conceptual synthesis. The analysis was conducted through several stages. First, data reduction was carried out by selecting relevant information from various literature sources. Second, thematic categorization grouped data into major themes such as program management, holistic-integrative PAUD, Islamic early childhood education, religious character, and parent partnerships. Third, critical interpretation was conducted by comparing similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations in previous research findings. Fourth, conceptual synthesis integrated various concepts and findings into a conceptual framework of holistic-integrative PIAUD program management for strengthening religious character. This process is in line with Snyder's (2019) view that a good literature review does not merely summarize prior research, but also develops new understanding through mapping, interpretation, and critical synthesis.

Data trustworthiness was maintained through source triangulation, referential adequacy, and citation consistency checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing various types of sources, including scholarly journal articles, official policy documents, and methodological studies. Referential adequacy was ensured by using literature that was relevant, verifiable, and directly connected to the research focus. Citation consistency checking was conducted to ensure that all sources cited in the text were included in the reference list and that all references listed were actually used in the discussion. Conceptual validity was also maintained by ensuring alignment among the

research focus, theoretical foundations, analytical method, and synthesis results. Thus, the trustworthiness of the study was not based on statistical validity, but on source accuracy, analytical depth, traceability of argumentation, and conceptual consistency.

Ethical considerations in this study were addressed by ensuring that all sources were cited correctly according to APA Style 7th Edition. This study did not involve human participants and therefore did not require informant consent procedures as in field research. Nevertheless, academic ethics were maintained through honesty in source use, avoidance of plagiarism, refusal to create fictitious references, and non-manipulation of prior authors' ideas. Every idea, concept, and finding derived from previous literature is stated through clear citation. With these principles, this study is expected to meet academic integrity standards and be suitable as part of a scholarly article for a reputable journal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study were compiled based on a synthesis of academic literature and policy documents relevant to holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management in strengthening religious character. Because this study is library research, the supporting data do not come from interviews or field observations, but from regulatory documents, scholarly journal articles, and previous research findings that were analyzed thematically.

Based on the literature review, five main themes were identified: Islamic value orientation as the basis of program management, holistic-integrative program planning, implementation of religious learning and habituation, institutional partnership with families, and authentic assessment of children's religious character.

Islamic Value Orientation as the Basis of PIAUD Program Management

The first finding shows that the management of Islamic Early Childhood Education programs needs to begin with Islamic value orientation as the institutional foundation. Islamic values should not merely be positioned as religious learning materials, but must become the basis of the institution's vision, mission, goals, culture, curriculum, habituation activities, teacher-child interactions, and institutional relationships with parents.

Billah et al. (2023) show that the objectives of Islamic education in early childhood must be directed toward holistic child development, covering spiritual, moral, social, intellectual, and emotional aspects. This finding is strengthened by Nurjamilah (2024), who affirms that Islamic Religious Education values play an important role in children's moral and religious development. Thus, the direction of PIAUD program management is not only oriented toward general developmental achievement, but also toward the formation of akhlak, adab, and religious habits.

The emerging pattern indicates that children's religious character is more effectively developed when Islamic values are integrated into the entire institutional management system. In other words, religious values should not stand as additional activities, but should become the basis for program decision-making, learning management, daily habituation, and educator role modeling. In this context, holistic-integrative PIAUD program management requires alignment between institutional orientation and daily educational practice.

The relationship among findings shows that Islamic value orientation is the starting point for all components of program management. Without a clear value orientation, the implementation of holistic-integrative services risks becoming merely administrative, while the strengthening of children's religious character remains unmanaged systematically.

Integrated Holistic-Integrative Program Planning

The second finding shows that strengthening religious character in early childhood requires

integrated program planning. Program planning does not only include classroom learning activities, but also health, nutrition, care, protection, family involvement, and religious value habituation services. This is consistent with Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 60 of 2013, which states that holistic-integrative early childhood development aims to fulfill children's essential needs in a comprehensive, integrated, and continuous manner (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013).

The Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Holistic-Integrative PAUD also emphasize that PAUD units need to design service programs involving various elements, including educators, education personnel, parents, communities, and other related parties (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015). In the PIAUD context, this planning needs to be strengthened by Islamic values so that each service is oriented not only toward children's physical and social development, but also toward their moral and spiritual development.

Findings from Angkur (2022) show that the implementation of holistic-integrative PAUD services requires program integration and coordination among service components. Lina et al. (2019) also found that evaluation of holistic-integrative PAUD programs needs to consider context, input, process, and product. This indicates that program planning must from the outset contain objectives, indicators, implementation strategies, resources, and evaluation mechanisms.

The pattern of findings shows that the main weakness in implementing holistic-integrative PAUD programs lies in the suboptimal integration among learning programs, child development services, and character education. In many contexts, religious activities are already implemented, but they are not always designed as part of systematic program planning.

The relationship between this finding and the first theme is clear. Islamic value orientation functions as the normative basis, while holistic-integrative planning functions as the managerial instrument for translating these values into concrete and measurable programs.

Integrative Implementation of Religious Learning and Habituation

The third finding indicates that religious character strengthening in PIAUD is most often carried out through habituation, role modeling, religious activities, educational play, and daily interaction between teachers and children. In early childhood, religious character cannot be formed through conceptual lectures alone, but through direct experience, positive routines, supportive environments, and repeated behavior.

Hasanah and Munastiwi (2019) found that religious character management in kindergarten can be carried out through habituation methods, such as praying, greeting with salam, behaving politely, maintaining cleanliness, and participating in simple religious activities. Firdaus et al. (2025) also show that the internalization of akhlakul karimah values in early childhood can be strengthened through the habituation of Islamic manners. Meanwhile, Hafidz et al. (2025) affirm that the habituation of religious values is an important model in early childhood religious education.

These literatures show that religious habituation is a dominant strategy in strengthening children's character. However, the emerging pattern indicates that habituation will be more effective when it does not stand alone, but is integrated with learning, institutional culture, educator role modeling, and communication with parents. Therefore, activities such as prayer before learning, salam, simple worship practices, sharing, maintaining cleanliness, responsibility, and compassion need to be managed as part of a planned educational program.

Agustin (2020) shows that character values can also be developed through children's games in Islamic education contexts. This finding broadens the pattern that strengthening religious character does not always have to be carried out through formal religious activities, but can also be embedded in games, stories, songs, social activities, and children's everyday experiences.

The relationship among findings shows that religious learning and habituation implementation serves as a bridge between program planning and expected character outcomes. Good planning will not have a significant impact if it is not translated into consistent, enjoyable,

developmentally appropriate, and Islamic value-based learning practices.

Partnership among Institutions, Teachers, Parents, and the Environment

The fourth finding shows that strengthening religious character in early childhood cannot be assigned solely to PIAUD institutions. Children's religious character is formed through continuity among school, family, and community environments. Therefore, holistic-integrative PIAUD program management needs to position partnership with parents as one of its main components.

Adriana and Zirmansyah (2021) show that parenting knowledge influences parental involvement in PAUD institutions. This finding indicates that parental participation does not emerge automatically, but needs to be built through communication, education, and partnership programs designed by the institution. Ivaniarahma and Putri (2025) also affirm the importance of communication strategies in implementing holistic-integrative PAUD. This means that the success of holistic-integrative services is strongly influenced by the quality of communication among institutions, teachers, parents, and relevant parties.

The pattern of findings shows that children's religious character is easier to strengthen when the values habituated at school are continued at home. For example, the habituation of prayer, salam, cleanliness, polite speech, respect for parents, and sharing with peers will be more effective when consistency exists between teachers and families. Conversely, when values taught at the institution are not supported by the family environment, the internalization of religious character becomes less optimal.

The relationship between this theme and previous themes indicates that the implementation of religious habituation requires ecosystem support. Teachers serve as role models within the institution, parents serve as reinforcers at home, and the social environment functions as a space for value actualization. Thus, partnership is not an additional component, but an integral part of holistic-integrative PIAUD program management.

Authentic Assessment of Children's Religious Character Development

The fifth finding shows that the assessment of religious character in early childhood needs to be authentic, continuous, and based on behavioral observation. Written tests or cognitive measures are inappropriate as the sole means of assessment because children's religious character is more visible in habits, attitudes, social responses, moral expressions, and daily behavior.

Lina et al. (2019) show that holistic-integrative PAUD program evaluation can be conducted using the CIPP model, which includes context, input, process, and product evaluation. In the context of religious character strengthening, context evaluation may include the alignment of the institution's vision with Islamic values; input evaluation may include teacher readiness, curriculum, and supporting facilities; process evaluation may include the implementation of habituation and learning; and product evaluation may include the development of children's religious behavior.

Kuncoro et al. (2025) affirm that character education management in PAUD requires management that includes planning, implementation, and evaluation. This indicates that religious character assessment must become part of the program management cycle. Evaluation is intended not only to assess children, but also to assess program effectiveness, the quality of habituation, teacher involvement, and parental support.

The findings indicate that authentic assessment can be carried out through daily observation, anecdotal records, developmental portfolios, teacher-parent communication reports, activity documentation, and educator reflection. Such assessment is more appropriate for early childhood characteristics because it can capture development naturally and contextually.

The relationship among findings shows that evaluation becomes the feedback point for program improvement. Evaluation results can be used to improve planning, strengthen habituation, enhance communication with parents, and adjust learning strategies to children's developmental

needs.

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of Research Findings

Main Theme	Main Finding	Supporting Literature	Pattern of Findings	Managerial Implication
Islamic value orientation	Islamic values become the basis of PIAUD vision, culture, and programs	Billah et al. (2023); Nurjamilah (2024)	Religious values are effective when they become institutional culture	Institutions need to formulate vision, mission, and programs based on Islamic values
Holistic-integrative planning	Programs need to cover education, care, health, nutrition, protection, and character	President of the Republic of Indonesia (2013); Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2015); Angkur (2022)	Services often remain partial when not designed integratively	Planning must contain objectives, indicators, strategies, and evaluation
Religious learning and habituation	Religious character is formed through habituation, role modeling, and daily activities	Hasanah & Munastiwi (2019); Firdaus et al. (2025); Hafidz et al. (2025)	Habituation is effective when consistent and integrated	Teachers need to serve as role models and manage religious routines
Family partnership	Parental involvement strengthens the continuity of religious character	Adriana & Zirmansyah (2021); Ivaniarahma & Putri (2025)	Values at school need to be continued at home	Institutions need to build communication and parenting education
Authentic assessment	Character assessment needs to be based on behavioral observation and developmental documentation	Lina et al. (2019); Kuncoro et al. (2025)	Evaluation must assess both children and the program	Institutions need to use anecdotal records, portfolios, and developmental reports

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Holistic-Integrative PIAUD Program Management for Strengthening Religious Character



The figure shows that strengthening religious character in early childhood does not emerge suddenly, but results from a systematic program management process. Islamic value orientation becomes the main foundation and is then translated into integrated planning, integrative implementation, sustainable partnership, and authentic assessment. All components are interconnected and form a management cycle oriented toward the formation of children's religious character.

Overall, the findings show that holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management for strengthening religious character needs to be built through the integration of Islamic values, program management, child development services, religious habituation, family partnerships, and authentic assessment. This finding indicates that religious character in early childhood cannot be sufficiently formed through routine religious activities, but requires a program design that is planned, consistent, measurable, and involves the entire child education ecosystem.

The main pattern found is that strengthening religious character will be more effective when PIAUD institutions are able to manage programs comprehensively. Islamic values function as the orientational basis; holistic-integrative planning functions as the program design; learning and habituation become spaces for value internalization; family partnership strengthens continuity; and authentic assessment becomes a tool for program improvement.

Thus, this study synthesizes that holistic-integrative PIAUD program management is a strategic approach to ensuring that early childhood education is oriented not only toward academic and social development, but also toward the formation of religious character reflected in children's habits, adab, responsibility, care, and Islamic behavior in everyday life

Discussion

The findings affirm that holistic-integrative PIAUD program management is a strategic approach to strengthening religious character in early childhood. This finding shows that religious character formation cannot be carried out spontaneously, partially, or only through routine religious activities, but requires a program management system that is planned, consistent, participatory, and sustainable. In Islamic Early Childhood Education, religious character needs to be understood as the result of interconnected managerial, pedagogical, cultural, and social processes. Therefore, strengthening children's religious character depends not only on religious subject matter, but also on institutional vision, religious culture, teacher role modeling, parental involvement, daily habituation, child development services, and authentic assessment.

Critically, this finding shows that the main problem in strengthening religious character in early childhood does not lie in the lack of religious activities in PIAUD institutions, but in the suboptimal management of these activities within an integrated program system. Many PIAUD institutions have conducted activities such as praying, reciting short surahs, greeting with salam, practicing simple worship, and habituating adab. However, if these activities are not designed within a clear program management framework, religious character strengthening risks remaining a symbolic routine. Thus, religious character must not only be taught, but also managed, habituated, modeled, evaluated, and continuously strengthened within the child education ecosystem.

This finding is closely related to the holistic-integrative PAUD concept, which positions children as whole persons. The holistic-integrative approach requires the fulfillment of children's needs comprehensively, including education, health, nutrition, care, protection, and welfare. This is in line with the national policy direction on Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Development, which emphasizes the fulfillment of children's essential needs in a comprehensive, integrated, and continuous manner (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013). The technical guidelines for implementing Holistic-Integrative PAUD also emphasize the importance of service integration in PAUD units through cooperation among institutions, families, communities, and relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015). In the PIAUD context, these holistic-integrative principles need to be expanded by making Islamic values the foundation of program orientation.

The relationship between the findings and program management theory can be seen in the importance of the planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up cycle. PIAUD program management is not limited to administrative arrangements, but also includes the management of vision, curriculum, institutional culture, educator resources, family partnerships, and child development assessment. This finding strengthens Rahman et al.'s (2023) view that curriculum management in integrated Islamic PAUD institutions requires purposeful management so that Islamic values can be integrated into the educational process. It is also in line with Kuncoro et al. (2025), who affirm that character education management in PAUD requires integration among planning, implementation, and evaluation. Religious character, therefore, cannot be positioned as a by-product of learning activities, but must become a consciously designed program objective.

Compared with previous research, these findings support Angkur's (2022) finding that the success of holistic-integrative PAUD services is influenced by program integration and coordination among service components. However, this article expands that finding by positioning religious character as a specific orientation in PIAUD program management. While Angkur's study emphasizes the general implementation of holistic-integrative PAUD services, this study affirms that the holistic-integrative approach in PIAUD needs to be directed by Islamic values so that it not only fulfills children's developmental needs, but also builds akhlak, adab, responsibility, care, and Islamic behavior.

These findings also support Lina et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of evaluating holistic-integrative PAUD programs through the CIPP model. In this article, evaluation is understood not merely as an administrative assessment activity, but as an authentic mechanism for reading

children's religious character development while improving program effectiveness. Assessment of religious character in early childhood cannot rely solely on cognitive measures; it needs to use behavioral observation, anecdotal records, portfolios, activity documentation, and developmental reports. Thus, this study expands the function of evaluation from merely measuring outcomes to serving as an instrument of institutional reflection.

In relation to Islamic early childhood education, these findings support Billah et al. (2023), who affirm that the goals of Islamic education in early childhood need to be directed toward holistic child development. This article expands that idea by showing that holistic Islamic educational goals cannot be achieved without systematic program management. In other words, Islamic values as educational goals must be translated into managerial instruments such as program planning, habituation strategies, the division of roles between teachers and parents, and assessment of character development. This is an important contribution of the article: connecting the normative orientation of Islamic education with operational program management mechanisms.

These findings also strengthen the studies of Hasanah and Munastiwi (2019), Firdaus et al. (2025), and Hafidz et al. (2025), which show that religious habituation and the habituation of religious values play an important role in forming early childhood character. However, this article critically emphasizes that habituation should not be understood as a mechanical routine. Religious habituation must be part of an institutional culture system that is designed, supervised, and evaluated. If habituation is carried out without teacher role modeling, without continuity with the family, and without developmental assessment, religious character formation risks becoming a formality. Therefore, religious habituation should be positioned as both a managerial and pedagogical strategy.

This study also expands Agustin's (2020) finding that children's character development in Islamic education can be carried out through play and children's cultural activities. In the context of holistic-integrative PIAUD program management, games, stories, songs, social activities, and daily routines can become media for internalizing religious values. This is important because young children learn through concrete experiences, social interaction, imitation, and repetition. Thus, religious character strengthening does not always have to appear in formal religious activities; it can be integrated into play, shared meals, cleanliness habits, sharing toys, helping friends, and respecting teachers.

These findings can also be enriched through the perspective of differentiated learning in Islamic education. Dinata, Ermayanti, and Hadi (2026) emphasize the importance of mentoring the implementation of differentiated learning to improve the quality of inclusive learning in the Diniyah Program of Ma'had Al Jami'ah. Although the study is situated in a diniyah program context, its ideas are relevant to holistic-integrative PIAUD program management because both emphasize educational services that are responsive to learners' diverse needs. In the PIAUD context, differentiation principles can be applied through adjustments in play activities, religious habituation, media use, teacher communication patterns, and child mentoring strategies according to each child's developmental stage, interests, readiness, and characteristics. Thus, religious character strengthening is not carried out uniformly, but managed inclusively so that each child receives meaningful, enjoyable, and needs-based religious experiences.

Family partnership is an important finding in this discussion. Strengthening children's religious character cannot rely solely on PIAUD institutions because the family is the primary space for forming children's habits. This finding supports Adriana and Zirmansyah (2021), who show that parenting knowledge influences parental involvement in PAUD institutions. It is also in line with Ivaniarahma and Putri (2025), who emphasize the importance of communication strategies in implementing holistic-integrative PAUD. From a program management perspective, communication between institutions and families is not merely an administrative complement, but an important instrument for maintaining value continuity between school and home.

In a broader context, strengthening religious character in early childhood also needs to be supported by a social-religious ecosystem that is moderate and adaptive to digital development.

Kuswadi, Dinata, and Firmansyah (2026) show that strengthening religious moderation through digital majelis taklim in Simpang Asam Village, Banjit District, Way Kanan Regency, can improve public understanding of religious moderation values, expand participation in digital-based religious activities, and develop tolerant, balanced, and wise attitudes in responding to religious differences and religious information in digital spaces. This finding is relevant to holistic-integrative PIAUD program management because children's religious character is shaped not only by educational institutions and families, but also by the social-religious climate of the community. Thus, strengthening religious character in PIAUD needs to be directed not only toward ritual piety, but also toward the formation of polite, tolerant, caring, and wise attitudes from an early age.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the development of Islamic early childhood education management studies. This contribution lies in the conceptual construction that holistic-integrative PIAUD program management should be built through five main components: Islamic value orientation, integrated planning, integrative implementation, sustainable partnership, and authentic assessment. These components form a conceptual framework explaining that religious character is the result of a systemically managed educational process. Thus, this article not only enriches studies on holistic-integrative PAUD, but also expands the discourse of Islamic education management by placing early childhood religious character as a program orientation.

Practically, this article offers a framework for PIAUD managers, institutional leaders, teachers, and parents in designing religious character strengthening programs. PIAUD institutions can use this framework to formulate Islamic value-based vision and mission statements, design holistic-integrative service programs, develop consistent religious habituation, build communication with families, and prepare authentic assessment of children's character development. For teachers, this article provides direction that religious learning in early childhood should be conducted through concrete experiences, role modeling, play, and enjoyable habituation. For parents, this article affirms the importance of continuity between habituation at the institution and habituation at home.

The policy implication of these findings is the need to strengthen PIAUD institutional policies that not only emphasize compliance with PAUD service standards, but also integrate Islamic values into all components of program management. Nationally formulated holistic-integrative PAUD policies need to be translated by PIAUD institutions into contextual, religious, and participatory program designs. In practice, institutions need program planning documents containing indicators of religious character, implementation strategies, the division of roles between teachers and parents, and mechanisms for assessing child development. Thus, policy does not stop at the administrative level, but truly becomes an operational guide for character formation.

The implication for educational practice is the importance of building an institutional culture that is both religious and child-friendly. Religious culture is not only realized through religious symbols or ceremonial activities, but through an atmosphere of interaction that reflects affection, politeness, responsibility, cleanliness, care, and respect for children. In this context, teachers play a central role as role models. Young children absorb values more easily through real examples than through verbal instruction. Therefore, teachers' character quality, consistency of attitude, and ability to build positive interactions are important elements of successful program management.

The implication for scholarly development can be seen in the need to expand PIAUD studies from a predominantly pedagogical approach toward a managerial-integrative approach. Studies on early childhood religious character have often focused more on learning strategies, habituation methods, or religious activities. This article shows that religious character formation also needs to be analyzed from the perspective of program management. Thus, PIAUD scholarship can develop in a more interdisciplinary direction by connecting Islamic education management, early childhood education, developmental psychology, character education, and holistic-integrative PAUD policy.

Nevertheless, this article has limitations. First, this study is a literature review and does not present field data from interviews, observations, or empirical documentation from a specific PIAUD institution. Second, the conceptual model offered remains a theoretical synthesis and therefore

requires empirical testing in various PIAUD institutional contexts. Third, the literature used is still dominated by the Indonesian context, so generalization to Islamic early childhood education in other countries should be made carefully. Fourth, this article has not directly measured the effectiveness of the model in changing children's religious behavior.

Based on these limitations, future research may be directed toward field studies using case study, phenomenological, program evaluation, or mixed methods approaches. Empirical research can test how the holistic-integrative PIAUD program management model is implemented in particular institutions, how institutional leaders and teachers manage religious habituation, how parental involvement affects the continuity of children's character, and how authentic assessment can be used to monitor religious character development. In this way, the conceptual model offered in this article can be developed into a more applicable operational model.

Synthetically, this discussion affirms that holistic-integrative PIAUD program management is a relevant, strategic, and contextual approach for strengthening religious character in early childhood. This approach does not position children merely as recipients of educational services, but as whole persons who require integrated spiritual, moral, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Islamic values become the foundation, program management becomes the mechanism, religious habituation becomes the internalization strategy, family becomes the sustainability partner, and authentic assessment becomes the tool for reflection and improvement. With this framework, strengthening religious character in early childhood can be carried out more systematically, not merely through religious routines, but through an Islamic education ecosystem that is planned, consistent, participatory, and sustainable

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that holistic-integrative Islamic Early Childhood Education program management is a relevant conceptual approach for strengthening religious character in early childhood in a planned, consistent, participatory, and sustainable manner. The research objective of formulating a conceptual synthesis of holistic-integrative PIAUD program management has been answered through the construction of five main components: Islamic value orientation, integrated program planning, implementation of religious learning and habituation, sustainable partnership with families, and authentic assessment of children's character development. These five components form a management framework that positions children as whole persons requiring integrated spiritual, moral, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

The synthesis of findings shows that strengthening religious character in early childhood cannot be achieved merely through routine religious activities such as prayers, memorization, salam, or simple worship practices. These activities need to be managed within a systematic Islamic education ecosystem, beginning from the formulation of institutional vision, program design, religious culture, teacher role modeling, daily habituation, parental involvement, and authentic assessment. Thus, religious character is not understood as the result of separate pedagogical activities, but as an outcome of an integrated program management system connecting values, services, learning practices, families, and evaluation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic early childhood education management by offering a conceptual framework that integrates the holistic-integrative approach and religious character strengthening. This article expands PIAUD discourse, which has tended to focus on learning strategies or religious habituation, toward a more systemic managerial perspective. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for PIAUD managers, institutional leaders, teachers, and parents in designing educational programs that not only fulfill children's developmental needs, but also build akhlak, adab, responsibility, care, and Islamic behavior in daily life.

The implication of this study is that PIAUD institutions need to formulate holistic-integrative programs based on Islamic values in a more operational, measurable, and sustainable manner. Institutional policies need to be directed toward strengthening religious culture, improving teacher

capacity, developing parenting programs, building family partnerships, and using authentic assessment to monitor children's character development. However, this study is limited because it is based on library research and conceptual synthesis, and therefore does not yet present empirical data from direct practice in specific PIAUD institutions.

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