

The Role of Morning Circle Activities in Fostering Discipline among Early Childhood Learners at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the role of *morning circle* activities in fostering discipline among young children at TK Islam Terpadu Syech Mahmud Air Jambu. This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The participants consisted of the principal, classroom teachers, and early childhood learners selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings revealed that *morning circle* was conducted routinely through praying, reciting short Qur'anic chapters, singing, attendance checking, introducing daily learning themes, and reinforcing classroom rules. These activities contributed significantly to developing children's discipline through habitual punctuality, orderly sitting behavior, compliance with classroom rules, attentive listening, turn-taking, and responsibility for learning activities. The successful implementation of *morning circle* was supported by teacher consistency, a religious school culture, and collaboration with parents, while challenges included differences in parenting styles, children's lateness, and varying levels of self-regulation. The study concludes that *morning circle* is an effective learning strategy for cultivating discipline while simultaneously internalizing Islamic and character education values through continuous habituation.

Keywords: *Morning Circle*, Discipline, Early Childhood, Habituation, Islamic Education.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) represents a fundamental stage in shaping children's character and personality. During this period, children experience the *golden age* of development, a critical phase that significantly influences their cognitive, socio-emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. Among the essential character values that should be cultivated from an early age, discipline occupies a central position. Discipline extends beyond mere compliance with rules; it also reflects children's ability to regulate their own behavior, develop a sense of responsibility, and establish positive habits that support their everyday lives.

Within the context of Islamic education, discipline encompasses a broader dimension. It is not merely concerned with maintaining orderly behavior but also with nurturing noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*) as an integral component of moral and spiritual development. Consequently, Islamic-based early childhood education institutions play a strategic role in integrating disciplinary values with Islamic teachings through structured, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning activities.

One instructional activity that has been widely recognized as effective in fostering discipline among young children is the morning circle. Morning circle is a routine activity conducted at the beginning of the school day, during which children gather in a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere to participate in various activities such as praying, singing, engaging in brief discussions, and reviewing classroom rules and the daily agenda. Beyond serving as an introductory learning session, morning circle functions as a medium for cultivating disciplined behaviors, including arriving at school on time, sitting orderly, listening attentively to the teacher, and following mutually agreed classroom rules.

From a pedagogical perspective, morning circle provides children with opportunities to learn through social interaction and direct experiences. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Furthermore, the habituation approach embedded in morning circle activities facilitates the gradual and continuous internalization of disciplinary values, enabling positive behaviors to become enduring habits.

Despite its educational potential, fostering discipline among young children remains a significant challenge in educational practice. Inconsistencies in rule implementation, diverse family backgrounds, and the limited range of instructional strategies employed by teachers often hinder the development of disciplined behavior. These challenges highlight the need for a more comprehensive investigation into the effectiveness of morning circle activities in promoting discipline, particularly within Islamic early childhood education settings.

Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, as one of the Islamic-based early childhood education institutions, offers a distinctive context in which morning circle has been systematically incorporated into the school's daily learning routine. The activity integrates not only cognitive and social learning experiences but also Islamic values that constitute the institution's educational identity. This unique implementation makes the school an important setting for investigating how morning circle contributes to the development of discipline among young children.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the role of morning circle activities in fostering discipline among early childhood learners at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of character-based early childhood education models while providing practical recommendations for educators in designing effective, meaningful, and character-oriented learning experiences.

Literature Review

2.1. Early Childhood Education and the Development of Discipline

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as the foundation for the development of individual character. During this stage, children experience rapid developmental growth, making educational stimulation highly influential in shaping their personality, including the development of disciplined behavior. In the context of early childhood education, discipline refers to children's ability to comply with established rules, exercise self-control, and demonstrate responsibility in various daily activities.

The cultivation of discipline cannot be achieved instantly; rather, it requires a continuous process involving habituation, adult role modeling, and a supportive learning environment. Habituation has been widely recognized as one of the most effective approaches to developing disciplinary character because repeated and consistent experiences gradually establish stable behavioral patterns. Previous studies have demonstrated that systematic and consistent habituation programs enhance children's ability to follow rules, assume responsibility, and develop independence.

Furthermore, daily routines within early childhood education settings play a crucial role in fostering discipline. Structured routines help children understand the concepts of order, responsibility, and self-regulation while providing a predictable environment that promotes emotional security. Such consistency enables children to adapt more effectively to classroom expectations and learning activities.

2.2. The Concept of Morning Circle in Early Childhood Education

Morning circle is a routine instructional activity conducted at the beginning of the school day in early childhood education settings. Typically, children gather in a circle to participate in various activities, including praying, singing, engaging in brief discussions, and reviewing the daily schedule and classroom expectations. Within the early childhood education literature, morning circle is often associated with *circle time*, which constitutes an essential component of daily classroom routines.

Morning circle serves as an interactive platform that promotes meaningful communication between teachers and children while simultaneously supporting the development of social, emotional, cognitive, and language skills. Through this activity, children are encouraged to express their ideas, share experiences, listen attentively to others, and develop mutual respect. Consequently, morning circle functions as an important pedagogical space for fostering participation, collaboration, and a sense of community within the classroom.

In practice, morning circle generally lasts between 15 and 20 minutes and includes structured activities such as attendance, storytelling or reading, singing, and guided discussions. Rather than functioning merely as a ceremonial opening activity, morning circle possesses substantial educational value because it contributes to children's social-emotional development while strengthening their capacity for behavioral self-regulation.

Moreover, within contemporary early childhood instructional approaches such as the **Beyond Centers and Circle Time (BCCT)** model, circle time represents a fundamental component of child-centered learning. This model emphasizes active interaction, hands-on experiences, and enjoyable learning environments that promote children's holistic development across multiple developmental domains.

2.3. Morning Circle as a Strategy for Developing Children's Discipline

Morning circle has considerable potential to foster discipline among young children because it is implemented consistently and systematically as part of the daily classroom routine. Through repeated participation, children gradually develop positive habits, including arriving at school punctually, following classroom rules, sitting appropriately, and paying attention to teachers' instructions.

Previous research indicates that routine activities such as morning circle positively influence multiple aspects of children's development, including behavioral self-control, sustained attention, and the reduction of disruptive behaviors. In addition, these activities contribute to the development of essential social competencies such as cooperation, empathy, patience, and turn-taking skills.

Similarly, other habituation-based morning activities, including morning journals and structured classroom routines, have been found to enhance children's discipline, self-confidence, and self-expression. These findings suggest that well-designed morning routines play a strategic role in supporting comprehensive character development during early childhood.

Accordingly, morning circle can be understood as a practical implementation of the habituation approach within early childhood education. Through structured, meaningful, and repeated experiences, children gradually internalize disciplinary values that become integrated into their everyday behavior.

2.4. Theoretical Perspectives: Constructivism and Sociocultural Theory

From a theoretical perspective, the implementation of morning circle can be explained through both constructivist and sociocultural learning theories. Constructivism maintains that children actively construct knowledge through direct experiences and interactions with their environment. Morning circle provides authentic and meaningful learning experiences that enable children to understand the concept of discipline through real-life practice rather than abstract instruction.

Meanwhile, sociocultural theory emphasizes that children's development occurs primarily through social interaction with teachers and peers. Collaborative activities within morning circle—such as discussions, experience sharing, and cooperative participation—provide meaningful opportunities for children to acquire appropriate social behaviors and values. Furthermore, teachers' scaffolding supports children in achieving higher levels of competence, particularly in developing discipline, self-regulation, and responsible behavior.

2.5. Islamic Education and the Habituation of Discipline

Within the perspective of Islamic education, discipline constitutes an essential component of moral (*akhlaq*) development. Discipline is understood not merely as compliance with external rules but also as an expression of obedience to Allah SWT and the practical implementation of Islamic moral values in everyday life.

The habituation approach occupies a central position in Islamic educational philosophy, as reflected in regular religious practices such as daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), supplication (*du'ā'*), and remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*). These repetitive acts of worship are intended to cultivate consistency, self-discipline, and noble character. In early childhood education, the habituation of religious practices through structured daily routines has been shown to effectively promote discipline, responsibility, and positive behavioral development.

Therefore, within Islamic-based early childhood education institutions, morning circle serves not only as an instructional activity but also as an important medium for internalizing

Islamic values that support the holistic development of children's discipline, character, and spiritual awareness.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of morning circle activities in fostering discipline among young children within their natural educational setting. The case study design enabled an intensive exploration of the implementation of morning circle activities in a specific educational institution, namely **Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten**, thereby providing a comprehensive and context-specific understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The research was conducted at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten. The participants consisted of classroom teachers, early childhood learners, and the school principal. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they possessed relevant knowledge and practical experience related to the research focus. Classroom teachers served as the primary implementers of the morning circle activities, the children were the main subjects for observing disciplinary behaviors, and the principal acted as a supporting informant by providing information regarding school policies and the implementation of the educational program.

The study focused on four main aspects: (1) the implementation of morning circle activities, (2) the forms of disciplined behavior demonstrated by young children during the activities, (3) the role of morning circle in fostering children's discipline, and (4) the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation. These focal areas were intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of morning circle activities to the development of disciplinary character in early childhood education.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation was conducted using a passive participant approach, allowing the researcher to directly observe the implementation of morning circle activities, including teacher–child interactions and children's disciplinary behaviors throughout the learning process. In-depth interviews were conducted with classroom teachers and the school principal to obtain detailed information regarding the planning, implementation, and challenges associated with morning circle activities. Documentary evidence, including daily lesson plans, photographs of classroom activities, and children's developmental records, was also examined to complement and corroborate the observational and interview data.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, relevant information was selected, categorized, and organized according to the research objectives. The data were subsequently presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation and analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process and were repeatedly verified against the collected evidence to ensure their consistency and credibility.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, while methodological triangulation involved cross-checking findings derived from observations, interviews, and documentary evidence. In addition, member checking was carried out by confirming the research findings with the participants to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations. The overall research

procedure comprised four stages: research preparation, data collection, data analysis, and the preparation of the research report in the form of a scientific article.

Results

4.1. Implementation of Morning Circle Activities at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten

The observational findings revealed that the morning circle was a routine activity conducted every morning before the commencement of the main instructional session. The activity lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and involved all children in an orderly, enjoyable, and interactive learning environment. The teacher initiated the session by inviting the children to sit together in a circle, followed by greeting one another, reciting prayers, memorizing short chapters of the Qur'an (*surahs*), chanting the *Asmaul Husna* (the Beautiful Names of Allah), singing educational songs, conducting attendance, introducing the day's learning theme, and providing motivational encouragement.

Interviews with classroom teachers indicated that the morning circle had become an integral part of the school's daily culture and was implemented consistently every school day. According to the teachers, the activity serves not only to prepare children for classroom learning but also to facilitate character development, particularly discipline, responsibility, and respectful behavior. The school principal further explained that all teachers were required to implement a relatively standardized morning circle routine to ensure consistency in children's learning experiences. In the principal's view, consistency is a fundamental factor in establishing positive habits during early childhood.

Document analysis further confirmed that morning circle activities were formally incorporated into the Daily Lesson Plan (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Harian—RPPH*) as part of the opening learning session. Photographic documentation illustrated children sitting in a circle, attentively following teachers' instructions, raising their hands before speaking, and participating collectively in prayers and songs. These findings indicate that morning circle has become a structured pedagogical routine and serves as the foundation of habituation-based learning at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten.

4.2. Forms of Disciplinary Behavior Demonstrated During Morning Circle Activities C

Classroom observations identified several indicators of disciplinary behavior that emerged during the implementation of morning circle activities. These included arriving at school punctually, sitting orderly throughout the session, participating in prayers and Qur'anic recitations without repeated reminders, listening attentively when teachers or peers were speaking, patiently waiting for their turn to answer questions, complying with agreed classroom rules, and returning learning materials after use.

Teachers reported that at the beginning of the academic semester, several children experienced difficulties following classroom rules. Some frequently changed seats, talked while the teacher was giving instructions, or arrived late at school. However, after participating in morning circle activities consistently over time, gradual improvements in children's behavior became increasingly evident.

Interview findings further revealed that most children had developed greater self-control. Children who previously required frequent reminders gradually became able to recognize appropriate moments to listen, speak, and comply with classroom expectations independently. These findings suggest that disciplinary behavior developed primarily through a continuous process of habituation rather than through punitive disciplinary measures.

4.3. The Role of Morning Circle in Fostering Children's Discipline

The findings demonstrate that morning circle plays a significant role in fostering discipline among young children. Its contribution can be understood through four interrelated dimensions.

4.3.1. A Medium for Habituation

The daily implementation of morning circle gradually establishes positive behavioral habits among children. Repeated activities such as praying, sitting appropriately, listening attentively to teachers, and following classroom rules eventually become automatic behaviors. Teachers explained that young children learn most effectively through repeated experiences; therefore, consistent practice enables disciplinary values to be internalized more naturally and sustainably.

4.3.2. A Medium for Learning Classroom Rules

Throughout the morning circle session, teachers consistently reinforced simple classroom expectations, including raising hands before speaking, sitting properly, respecting peers, avoiding disruptive behavior, and maintaining classroom cleanliness. These rules were communicated in an engaging and age-appropriate manner, allowing children to understand not only what was expected of them but also why these rules were important.

4.3.3. A Medium for Reinforcing Islamic Values

At Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, morning circle extends beyond academic preparation by incorporating religious habituation practices, including reciting daily prayers, memorizing short Qur'anic chapters, sending blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (*ṣalawāt*), and exchanging Islamic greetings (*salām*). These activities indirectly cultivate spiritual discipline by encouraging children to practice Islamic rituals consistently as part of their daily routines.

4.3.4. A Means of Developing Self-Regulation

Observational data indicated that children gradually became more capable of regulating their emotions, waiting patiently for their turn, respecting their peers, and completing classroom activities responsibly. Teachers supported this process by modeling appropriate behaviors and providing individualized guidance whenever children encountered difficulties. Consequently, morning circle functions as a holistic approach to discipline development by simultaneously promoting behavioral, social, emotional, and spiritual competencies.

4.4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Morning Circle

The study identified several factors that contributed to the successful implementation of morning circle activities. Supporting factors included teachers' consistency in conducting the activity every day, the school principal's commitment to character education programs, the school's religious atmosphere, active parental involvement in reinforcing discipline at home, and the creation of a positive and enjoyable learning environment.

Nevertheless, several challenges were also identified. These included children's occasional lateness, variations in parenting practices across families, the relatively short attention span characteristic of young children, fluctuating emotional conditions, and relatively large class sizes that required teachers to provide greater individual attention.

To address these challenges, teachers adopted individualized instructional approaches, applied positive reinforcement strategies, and maintained continuous communication with parents to ensure consistency between school- and home-based disciplinary practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that morning circle activities at Syech Mahmud Air Jambu Integrated Islamic Kindergarten play a significant role in fostering discipline among young children through a habituation process that is implemented consistently, systematically, and integrated with the values of Islamic education. Morning circle is carried out through a series of structured daily activities, including exchanging greetings (*salām*), reciting prayers, memorizing short chapters of the Qur'an (*surahs*), chanting the *Asmaul Husna* (the Beautiful Names of Allah), singing educational songs, taking attendance, introducing the daily learning theme, and reinforcing classroom rules. The consistent implementation of these activities enables morning circle to function not only as an introductory learning session but also as an effective medium for character education.

The findings further indicate that morning circle contributes to the development of various indicators of disciplinary behavior among young children. These include arriving at school punctually, sitting orderly during classroom activities, complying with classroom rules, listening attentively when teachers and peers are speaking, waiting patiently for their turn, completing assigned responsibilities, and demonstrating appropriate self-control throughout the learning process. These behavioral improvements emerge through continuous habituation, allowing discipline to gradually develop into positive daily habits.

The study also demonstrates that morning circle functions as a medium for cultivating disciplined behavior, facilitating children's understanding of classroom rules, reinforcing Islamic values, and promoting the development of self-regulation. The successful implementation of the program is supported by teachers' consistency in maintaining daily routines, the school principal's commitment to character education, a religious school culture, a supportive learning environment, and active parental involvement in reinforcing disciplinary habits at home. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including differences in family parenting practices, children's occasional lateness, the naturally limited attention span of young learners, fluctuating emotional conditions, and variations in children's self-regulation abilities.

Overall, this study confirms that morning circle is an effective instructional strategy for fostering discipline in early childhood education because it holistically integrates habituation, teacher role modeling, social interaction, and the internalization of Islamic values. Therefore, morning circle should be maintained and further developed as an integral component of school culture within Islamic early childhood education institutions. Strengthening collaboration between schools and families is equally important to ensure that disciplinary habits are consistently reinforced across both educational and home environments. In addition to its practical implications for character-based learning, this study underscores the importance of the habituation approach as a foundational strategy for developing discipline and supporting children's long-term character development throughout subsequent stages of education.

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