

# Implementation of the Demonstration Method to Improve Children's Understanding of Dhuha Prayer Procedures at TK Haholongan Padangsidimpuan

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## Abstract

Understanding the procedures of Dhuha prayer is a fundamental competency in Islamic religious education for early childhood, yet field observations consistently reveal very low initial achievement in this area. This study aims to describe the implementation process of the demonstration method in teaching Dhuha prayer procedures and to analyze its effectiveness in improving children's understanding at TK Haholongan Padangsidimpuan. A qualitative descriptive research approach was employed, with 20 Group B children aged 5–6 years as research subjects. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with the school principal and class teacher, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model. Before intervention, only an average of 23% of children demonstrated adequate understanding across six measured indicators. After eight weeks of systematic demonstration method implementation across three structured stages – preparation, implementation, and follow-up – the average increased significantly to 65% of children achieving adequate understanding across all indicators. The most notable improvements were in the indicators of stating the sequence of prayer steps and demonstrating a focused (khushu') attitude, each increasing from approximately 25–30% to 70%. The effectiveness of the demonstration method is explained through Bandura's observational learning mechanism, Vygotsky's scaffolding concept, and multi-sensory encoding processes. These findings confirm that the demonstration method is more appropriate than verbal-only approaches for teaching procedural Islamic worship content to early childhood children.

**Keywords:** Demonstration Method, Dhuha Prayer, Early Childhood, Islamic Education

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## Introduction

Islamic religious education in early childhood institutions constitutes a foundational pillar for the formation of a generation with strong character and religiosity. Among the various dimensions of Islamic education for young children, learning worship practices – particularly the procedures for performing prayer – holds a central place. Dhuha prayer, as one of the emphasized sunnah (voluntary) prayers in Islam, carries special significance in early childhood Islamic education not only as a spiritual practice but also as a vehicle for developing discipline, regularity, and a sense of responsibility (Hotimah et al., 2025). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Every morning every joint of one of you must give charity. Every tasbih is charity, every tahmid is charity, and every tahlil is charity – and two rak'ah of Dhuha prayer suffices for all of this” (HR. Muslim). This hadith underscores the spiritual and developmental value of establishing Dhuha prayer as a habitual practice from an early age.

From a developmental neuroscience perspective, early childhood (ages 0–8) constitutes a sensitive period for habit formation, religious attitude development, and procedural learning. During this period, the brain's plasticity is at its peak, making it the most opportune time for instilling Islamic values and worship practices through consistent, engaging, and developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches (Center on the Developing Child, 2007). However, teaching procedural worship content – such as the sequential movements and recitations of Dhuha prayer – to young children presents significant pedagogical challenges. The procedural nature of prayer, which requires the simultaneous coordination of specific body movements and Arabic recitations in a fixed sequence, cannot be adequately taught through verbal explanation alone.

Field observations at TK Haholongan Padangsidempuan revealed that prior to intervention, children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures was very low – with an average of only 23% of children demonstrating adequate understanding across six measured indicators. Class teacher interviews confirmed that this was primarily due to the dominance of verbal (lecture) methods in teaching worship procedures: “We have mostly been explaining verbally and memorizing recitations only; children get bored quickly and cannot immediately understand the sequence of movements.” This situation reflects a systematic mismatch between the instructional method employed and the concrete, visual learning characteristics of children aged 5–6 years who are in Piaget's (1969) preoperational stage.

The demonstration method – defined as a teaching strategy that shows a process, activity, or specific skill concretely in front of students so they can observe, understand, and then imitate or practice what has been demonstrated (Djamarah & Zain, 2018) – offers a pedagogically sound solution to this challenge. The theoretical alignment between the demonstration method and early childhood learning characteristics is strong: Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory affirms that a significant portion of human behavior is learned through observational learning; Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept explains how structured teacher demonstration provides appropriate scaffolding within the child's developmental zone; and NAEYC's (2020) Developmentally Appropriate Practice emphasizes active, concrete, and multi-sensory learning for this age group.

Multiple empirical studies have confirmed the effectiveness of the demonstration method in improving children's understanding of Islamic worship practices. Frastica et al. (2021) found significant improvement in early childhood children's prayer practice ability through the demonstration method. Putra and Suyadi (2020) reported similar improvements in prayer learning at the elementary level. Huda and Saroh (2023) confirmed the method's effectiveness for improving understanding of prayer procedures in Islamic boarding school contexts. This study therefore aims to: (1) describe the initial condition of children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures at TK Haholongan Padangsidempuan; (2) describe the three-stage implementation process of the demonstration method; (3) analyze the improvement in

children's understanding after intervention; and (4) identify the pedagogical implications of the findings.

## Literature Review

### 2.1. The Demonstration Method: Concept and Theoretical Foundations

The demonstration method is a teaching strategy conducted by performing a process, activity, or specific skill concretely in front of students so they can observe, understand, and then imitate or practice what has been demonstrated. Djamarah and Zain (2018) define it as a method used to show a process or how an object works related to lesson material in a way that can be directly observed by students. Uno and Mohamad (2022) add the dimension that the demonstration method presents a process accompanied by explanation, so that students obtain a more concrete and meaningful understanding.

The theoretical foundations of the demonstration method rest on three complementary frameworks. First, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory affirms that human behavior is largely learned through observational learning, identifying four core processes: (a) attention, the child must carefully observe the model; (b) retention, the child must store observed information in memory; (c) reproduction, the child must be able to reproduce the observed behavior; and (d) motivation, the child must have the motivation to perform the learned behavior. The demonstration method, by presenting a competent model (teacher) and providing opportunities for direct imitation, activates all four of these processes.

Second, Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory provides a complementary framework. The ZPD concept explains that children learn most effectively when receiving guidance from someone more competent within their proximal developmental zone. In the context of Dhuha prayer demonstration, the teacher functions as the "more knowledgeable other" (MKO), providing scaffolding through staged demonstration and gradual guidance that helps children build understanding they could not achieve independently. Third, Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning affirms that instruction connecting new information with children's existing knowledge and experience produces deeper and more durable understanding – a process facilitated by the concrete, experiential approach of demonstration (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Mayer's (2001) research on multimedia learning found that learning combining visual demonstration with verbal explanation produces significantly better understanding than text- or verbal-based instruction alone – a phenomenon termed the multimedia effect. Kozma (2003) also confirmed that dynamic visual representations substantially increase understanding and retention of complex procedural concepts. The demonstration method's procedural steps, according to Majid (2017), encompass three main stages: (1) preparation – setting measurable learning objectives, preparing media and tools, arranging the learning space, and providing brief orientation to children; (2) implementation – complete and systematic teacher demonstration accompanied by clear verbal explanation, followed by joint practice; and (3) follow-up – evaluation of children's independent practice, constructive feedback, reinforcement for consolidation, and reflective review.

### 2.2. Dhuha Prayer in Early Childhood Islamic Education

Dhuha prayer is a sunnah mu'akkadah (emphasized voluntary prayer) whose virtue has been documented in various hadith. From an educational perspective, habituation of Dhuha prayer from early childhood provides dual benefits: spiritual benefits through drawing closer to Allah SWT, and character benefits through training in discipline, regularity, and responsibility. Hotimah et al. (2025) found that consistently practiced worship from an early age contributes significantly to children's moral and religious development, including

improvement in self-regulation ability and prosocial behavior. Adawiyah et al. (2025) confirmed that Dhuha prayer habituation plays an important role in forming disciplined, responsible, and strongly characterized generations.

Nareswari and Chusniatun (2024) found that Dhuha prayer habituation has a significant effect on student discipline, working through mechanisms of routine formation, reinforcement of intrinsic religious motivation, and development of self-regulation – an important foundation for children's learning readiness. In the context of Islamic worship education, the demonstration method has a special advantage: the sequential movements of prayer – which require coordinating specific body positions with specific recitations in a fixed order – cannot be optimally understood through verbal explanation alone. Sumirah et al. (2023) affirm that the demonstration method in forming early childhood character through worship practice works through a habituation mechanism that begins with observation, continues with imitation, and is strengthened through repeated practice – aligned with the Islamic principle of *ta'allum bi al-'amal* (learning through practice).

### **2.3. Early Childhood Learning Characteristics and the Case for Demonstration**

Children aged 5–6 years are in the late preoperational stage according to Piaget's cognitive development theory, characterized by perception-based and concrete-experience-dominated thinking, increasingly mature symbolic function, and beginning development of more structured memory capacity. At this stage, children are highly responsive to engaging visual stimulation and learn most effectively through concrete experience and direct observation, not through verbal abstraction (Piaget, 1969). NAEYC's (2020) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* identifies active learning (children learn best when physically, mentally, and emotionally engaged), play-based learning (play context provides high intrinsic motivation), and multi-modal engagement as core principles for this age group.

The mismatch between verbal teaching methods and these concrete learning characteristics creates a systematic barrier to children's understanding of procedural content such as prayer procedures. When instruction is presented only verbally and abstractly, children do not receive the sensory input required to build accurate mental representations of the sequential movements and recitations involved. The demonstration method directly addresses this mismatch by providing the visual model, auditory input, and kinesthetic practice that align with how early childhood children naturally learn.

## **Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Design and Approach**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to deeply, holistically, and contextually understand and describe the process of demonstration method implementation in Dhuha prayer learning at TK Haholongan Padangsidempuan (Murdiyanto, 2020). Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on statistical measurement and generalization, qualitative research allows the researcher to capture the complexity of the learning phenomenon in its natural context, including teacher-child interaction, classroom dynamics, and contextual factors influencing the method's effectiveness. A descriptive research type was selected because the study's primary aim is accurate and comprehensive description – not hypothesis testing – of the process and outcomes of demonstration method implementation (Sugiyono, 2021).

### **3.2. Research Setting, Period, and Subjects**

The research was conducted at TK Haholongan, Padangsidempuan City, North Sumatra, during the period January to March 2026. Research subjects were all Group B children (aged 5–6 years) totaling 20 children. Group B was selected because children aged 5–6 years have

sufficient cognitive, motor, and language development maturity to participate in structured Dhuha prayer learning. Research informants consisted of two individuals – the School Principal and Class Teacher – selected purposively for their direct knowledge and involvement in learning planning and implementation.

### 3.3. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, participatory observation: the researcher directly observed the learning process during activities using a structured observation guide developed based on six indicators of Dhuha prayer procedure understanding: (1) stating the sequence of prayer steps; (2) knowing the number of rak'ah; (3) imitating simple prayer recitations; (4) demonstrating prayer movements correctly; (5) connecting movements and recitations in sequence; and (6) showing a focused (khushu') attitude during prayer. Second, semi-structured interviews: in-depth interviews were conducted with the School Principal and Class Teacher to gather information on learning planning, demonstration method implementation strategies, challenges encountered, and learning outcome evaluation. Third, documentation: collection of daily lesson plans (RPPH), teacher assessment records, and photographs and audio-visual recordings of learning activities (with school and parental consent).

### 3.4. Data Validity and Analysis

Data validity was maintained through comprehensive triangulation: technique triangulation (comparing and cross-checking data from observation, interviews, and documentation) and source triangulation (comparing information from the School Principal, Class Teacher, and direct observation of children's behavior). Member checking was also conducted by confirming key findings with informants to ensure interpretive accuracy. These steps were undertaken to fulfill the four criteria of qualitative data validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data analysis used Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model consisting of three stages that proceed simultaneously and continuously: (1) data reduction – selection, focusing, and transformation of raw field data by identifying main themes relevant to the research focus; (2) data presentation – organizing findings into structured thematic descriptions covering three main aspects: planning, implementation, and evaluation; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification – formulating meaning from patterns found in the data, verified through cross-checking with original data and theoretical frameworks.

## Results

### 4.1. Initial Condition: Children's Understanding of Dhuha Prayer Procedures

Initial observations conducted before demonstration method implementation revealed that children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures at TK Haholongan Padangsidempuan was very low. Of the 20 research subjects, assessment across six indicators showed an average of only 23% of children demonstrating adequate understanding. Per-indicator results were: only 5 children (25%) could state the sequence of Dhuha prayer steps correctly; 4 children (20%) knew the number of rak'ah; 3 children (15%) could imitate simple prayer recitations fluently; 6 children (30%) could demonstrate prayer movements correctly; 4 children (20%) could connect movements and recitations in sequence; and 6 children (30%) showed a khushu' attitude during prayer.

Class Teacher interviews confirmed that this low achievement was primarily caused by the dominance of verbal methods in the learning process: “We have mostly been explaining verbally and memorizing recitations only; children get bored quickly and cannot immediately understand the sequence of movements.” The School Principal also confirmed that the existing

worship learning curriculum had not yet explicitly integrated a demonstration approach, so that learning had not been able to reach the holistic dimensions of child development. From a theoretical perspective, this condition reflects the mismatch between the instructional method and the concrete learning characteristics of preoperational children who require concrete, visual experience to build understanding – identified by Piaget (1969) and confirmed by Pratama and Mahmudah (2024).

#### 4.2. Implementation of the Demonstration Method: Three Structured Stages

**Stage 1: Preparation.** Before each demonstration session, the teacher conducted comprehensive preparation including: (a) developing RPPH that explicitly integrated the demonstration method with measurable learning objectives; (b) preparing learning media – prayer mat, prayer veil/sarong, and large-format printed visual guides of prayer movement sequences; (c) arranging the classroom in a semicircle so all children could clearly observe the demonstration; and (d) providing brief apperception to children about what would be learned and why Dhuha prayer is important. As Sanjaya (2016) emphasizes, the success of the demonstration method depends greatly on the quality of planning and completeness of media used.

**Stage 2: Implementation.** Demonstration was conducted in stages and with repetition. First, the teacher performed the complete Dhuha prayer procedure from intention (niyyah) to final greeting (salam), voicing each recitation clearly and at a slow tempo, while children observed without yet imitating. Second, the teacher repeated the demonstration movement by movement – niyyah, takbiratul ihram, standing recitation, ruku', i'tidal, sujud, sitting between prostrations, tashahhud, and salam – with simple, child-comprehensible verbal explanations for each. Third, the teacher guided children to imitate each movement together (whole-class practice), then in small groups (4–5 children), and finally individually. This consistent repetition aligns with the principle of spaced practice proven to produce stronger memory retention (Mayer, 2001).

**Stage 3: Follow-up.** After demonstration and joint practice sessions, the teacher conducted informal evaluation through observation of children's ability to independently perform Dhuha prayer. Children showing difficulty with particular movements or recitations received intensive individual guidance. At the end of each session, the teacher provided positive reinforcement through verbal praise, collective applause, or achievement stars to all children regardless of achievement level, to build motivation and self-confidence. Supporting factors identified during implementation included: use of simple, clear, age-appropriate language; slow and structured demonstration tempo; and a relaxed, non-pressuring learning atmosphere where children felt safe to try and make mistakes (Frastica et al., 2021).

#### 4.3. Improvement in Children's Understanding After Intervention

After consistent demonstration method implementation over approximately eight weeks, significant improvement was observed in children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures. The overall average rose from 23% initially to 65% of children demonstrating adequate understanding across all six indicators. Detailed results are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Children's Understanding of Dhuha Prayer Procedures: Before and After Intervention**

| Indicator                                  | Initial (%) | After Intervention (%) | Increase (pp) | Category    |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Stating the sequence of Dhuha prayer steps | 25          | 70                     | +45           | Significant |
| Knowing the number of rak'ah               | 20          | 65                     | +45           | Significant |
| Imitating simple Dhuha prayer recitations  | 15          | 60                     | +45           | Significant |

|                                                    |           |           |            |                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------------|
| Demonstrating prayer movements correctly           | 30        | 65        | +35        | Significant        |
| Connecting movements and recitations in sequence   | 20        | 60        | +40        | Significant        |
| Showing a focused attitude (khushu') during prayer | 30        | 70        | +40        | Significant        |
| <b>Overall Average</b>                             | <b>23</b> | <b>65</b> | <b>+42</b> | <b>Significant</b> |

The most significant improvements occurred in the indicators of stating the sequence of Dhuha prayer steps (from 25% to 70%) and showing a khushu' attitude during prayer (from 30% to 70%). The dramatic improvement in the sequence indicator confirms that repeated visual demonstration is highly effective in helping children build accurate sequential representations of prayer procedure – directly addressing the primary weakness of the prior verbal-only approach. The improvement in the khushu' indicator, which initially appeared most challenging given its affective nature, demonstrates that when children develop better understanding of movements and recitations, their spiritual engagement with the worship practice deepens naturally.

These findings are consistent with and reinforce previous research. Frastica et al. (2021) found significant improvement in early childhood children's prayer practice ability after demonstration method implementation, with average improvement from the “emerging” to “developing as expected” category. Putra and Suyadi (2020) reported similar improvements in prayer learning at the elementary level. Huda and Saroh (2023) confirmed the demonstration method's effectiveness for improving understanding of prayer procedures in pesantren contexts. The consistency of findings across educational contexts and levels provides strong empirical support for the demonstration method as a reliable strategy for Islamic worship instruction.

#### 4.4. Discussion: Mechanisms of Effectiveness

The significant improvement in children's understanding can be explained through three interrelated mechanisms. First, through Bandura's observational learning mechanism: the competent teacher model enabled children to accurately observe the desired behavior, which was then reproduced through an imitation process motivated by consistent positive reinforcement. The four-stage learning sequence in Bandura's theory – attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation – was systematically activated through each demonstration session (Bandura, 1977).

Second, through Vygotsky's scaffolding mechanism: the teacher's graduated guidance – from complete demonstration to whole-class practice to small-group practice to individual practice – systematically supported children across their ZPD, from inability to ability with assistance, and ultimately to independent competence. This scaffolding process directly operationalizes Vygotsky's theoretical framework for how children develop higher psychological processes through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Third, through multi-modal sensory activation: demonstration simultaneously activates the visual system (seeing movements), auditory system (hearing recitations and explanations), and kinesthetic system (practicing movements), producing stronger memory encoding and deeper understanding than any single-modality approach. Jensen (2005) affirms that multi-sensory learning activates more neural pathways simultaneously, producing more robust and durable memory consolidation. Mayer's (2001) multimedia effect – the empirical finding that combining visual demonstration with verbal explanation produces significantly better learning outcomes than either modality alone – provides additional theoretical grounding.

#### 4.5. Pedagogical Implications

These findings carry important pedagogical implications for Islamic religious education practice in early childhood institutions. First, the demonstration method must be positioned as the primary method – not merely a supplement – in teaching worship procedures for early childhood children. The principle of “show, don't just tell” that constitutes the core of the demonstration method is fundamentally aligned with the concrete, visual learning characteristics of early childhood. Second, consistent and structured repetition (spaced repetition) is an indispensable component in early childhood worship learning. Sustained habituation – not a one-time demonstration – is the key to forming deep understanding and durable worship habits. Third, evaluation of children's understanding of worship procedures must encompass the performative dimension (ability to practice) alongside the cognitive-verbal dimension, to obtain a complete picture of children's achievement.

## Conclusion

Based on research results and discussion, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, the initial condition of children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures at TK Haholongan Padangsidempuan was low, with an average of only 23% of children demonstrating adequate understanding across six measured indicators. This low achievement was primarily caused by the dominance of verbal methods in teaching that do not align with the concrete learning characteristics of early childhood children in the preoperational stage. Second, the demonstration method was implemented through three structured stages: preparation (RPPH development, media preparation, classroom arrangement, and orientation), implementation (staged teacher demonstration, joint practice, and individual practice), and follow-up (evaluation, individual guidance, and positive reinforcement). These three stages were consistently implemented over eight weeks of research with full support from the School Principal and Class Teacher.

Third, the demonstration method proved effective in significantly improving children's understanding of Dhuha prayer procedures from an average of 23% (initial condition) to 65% after intervention, representing an average improvement of 42 percentage points across all indicators. This effectiveness operates through three primary mechanisms: Bandura's observational learning, Vygotsky's scaffolding, and multi-modal sensory activation. The most dramatic improvements were in sequential understanding (25% to 70%) and khushu' attitude (30% to 70%), confirming that visual, procedural demonstration is uniquely suited to teaching the sequential and affective dimensions of Islamic prayer practice to young children.

Four strategic recommendations are offered based on these conclusions. For teachers at TK Haholongan and other Islamic PAUD institutions: position the demonstration method as the primary instructional strategy for worship procedure teaching, implemented repeatedly, gradually, and consistently. For school principals and administrators: integrate a regular Dhuha prayer habituation program (daily or several times per week) into the school schedule, as consistency is the key factor in forming deep understanding and lasting worship habits. For parents: strengthen and facilitate Dhuha prayer practice at home as a continuation of school learning; consistent collaboration between school and family will accelerate and reinforce children's internalization of worship procedures. For future researchers: develop research with more systematic designs such as Classroom Action Research (CAR) or experimental designs to measure the demonstration method's effectiveness more precisely, and explore combinations of demonstration with technology-based media (such as animated prayer movement videos) that may further enhance learning appeal and effectiveness.

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