

Religious and Moral Values Learning Based on Integration-Interconnection in Early Childhood Education

Dwi Hastuti^{1*}, and Shomiyatun²

^{1,2} STPI Bina Insan Mulia Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
dwikuzuma900@gmail.com *

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received June 22, 2026

Revised July 27, 2026

Accepted August 10, 2026

Keywords: Religious and moral values; integration-interconnection; early childhood education

ABSTRACT

Religious and moral values (RMV) form one of the six developmental domains that must be nurtured from an early age, yet ECE institutions in practice still tend to deliver RMV instruction separately from other domains such as science, language, art, and social life, leaving religious values understood mainly through text and memorisation rather than internalised behaviour. This article conceptually examines how the integration-interconnection paradigm popularised by M. Amin Abdullah can be adapted as a learning framework for RMV in ECE. Using a library research method, this study reviewed accredited national and international journal articles and books on the topic. The findings show that integration-interconnection in ECE RMV learning is best realised through a thematic-holistic strategy that weaves spiritual values into science, art, language, and social activities via storytelling, role-play, habituation, and digital media, supported by close collaboration between educators and parents. This study recommends an integrated curriculum that removes the dichotomy between religious and general education from an early age. Unlike earlier work, which treats integration-interconnection as a higher-education discourse or discusses RMV strategies in isolation from it, this article's novelty lies in synthesising both bodies of literature into a single thematic-holistic framework tailored to ECE in the digital era.

I. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a critical stage of education because it falls within the age range known as the golden age, the period when children's brains develop most rapidly and basic behavioral patterns begin to form. One of the six developmental domains that must be stimulated during this period is religious and moral values (RMV), which form the foundation for shaping children's character, spiritual devotion, and social sensitivity in later life. Various studies affirm that cultivating RMV from an early age can be done through habituating worship practices, role modeling, storytelling activities, role-play, and the use of audiovisual media, and has proven effective in shaping children's understanding of good and bad behavior (Kholila & Khadijah, 2023; Meilasari & Ichsan, 2024). The problem is that, in practice, RMV learning in many ECE institutions is still carried out separately from other learning content, such as science, language, art, and children's social life. Religious values are largely taught through memorizing prayers, short verses, and ritual symbols, without being meaningfully connected to children's everyday learning experiences (Erda et al., 2025). Yet the guiding principle of ECE learning is holistic-integrative, meaning learning that covers all aspects of a child's development comprehensively and in an interconnected manner, rather than in isolation (Suartha & Rahayu, 2018). Within the context of Islamic scholarship, the dichotomy between religious and general sciences has long concerned education scholars, one of whom is M. Amin Abdullah, Professor of Islamic Philosophy at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. He proposed the

paradigm of scientific integration-interconnection as a response to concerns over the separation between Islamic sciences and general sciences in Islamic higher education institutions (Riyanto in Siswanto, 2024). This paradigm positions various disciplines, whether derived from revelation or reason, so that they complement and reinforce one another, so that religious knowledge is not confined solely to normative texts but actively engages with empirical realities and contemporary sciences (Siswanto, 2024; Tajuddin & Awwaliyah, 2021).

This integration-interconnection idea was initially developed for the context of higher education and Islamic studies (Mustofa et al., 2024), but a number of recent studies have begun exploring its relevance for lower levels of education, including ECE (Dewi et al., 2024). This aligns with the pressing need for an RMV learning model that does not stand alone but is interwoven with the introduction of science, art, language, and children's social interaction, so that religious values truly come alive in children's daily lives rather than remaining merely memorized normative knowledge. This challenge has become increasingly complex in the digital era, as children have become familiar with various digital platforms from an early age (Ningrum, 2023, as cited in Tim Penulis JEA, 2024). On one hand, digital technology opens up great opportunities to introduce religious and moral values through more engaging and interactive media, such as religiously themed audio-graphic e-books (Fikri, 2024); on the other hand, exposure to inappropriate content is also a real risk that must be jointly anticipated by teachers and parents. A study of Generation Z pre-service teachers even shows a shift in priorities in understanding early childhood RMV, which needs to be addressed with a more contextual and meaningful learning framework (Jumiatmoko, 2022). Despite this growing body of literature, a clear gap remains: studies on RMV cultivation in ECE have mostly described isolated strategies, such as storytelling, habituation, or digital media, without situating them within a coherent epistemological framework, while studies on the integration-interconnection paradigm have remained confined to higher education and Islamic studies discourse and have rarely been operationalised for the early childhood level (Mustofa et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). This gap matters because, without an explicit conceptual bridge between the two literatures, RMV learning in ECE risks continuing to be delivered as an isolated subject rather than as an integrated part of children's holistic development, which is precisely the urgency this study seeks to address. Based on this discussion, this article was written to examine religious and moral values learning in early childhood based on integration-interconnection. This study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of curricula and ECE learning practices that are more holistic, without separating religious content from other scientific content.

II. METHODS

This article was developed using a descriptive qualitative approach through the library research method. This method was chosen because the aim of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the concepts, theories, and findings of prior research related to religious and moral values learning and the integration-interconnection paradigm, without requiring field data collection. The data sources in this study comprise three main categories: (1) Sinta-accredited national journal articles; (2) international journal articles and English-language national journal articles indexed in international databases (DOAJ); and (3) books discussing the development of religious and moral values in early childhood and character education. The selection of literature was guided by explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to keep the review process transparent. Sources were included if they: (1) were published within the last ten years (2015–2025), with priority given to publications from the last five years; (2) directly discussed religious and moral values in early childhood, the integration-interconnection paradigm, or holistic-integrative ECE curricula; and (3) were published

in Sinta-accredited or internationally indexed journals, or in books from reputable academic publishers. Sources were excluded if they: (1) were not peer-reviewed (e.g., blogs, non-academic opinion pieces); (2) discussed RMV or integration-interconnection in contexts unrelated to early childhood or general education without clear conceptual relevance; or (3) could not be accessed in full text. Data collection was carried out by searching scientific databases (Google Scholar, DOAJ, and related journal repositories) using the keywords “religious and moral values in early childhood,” “integration-interconnection,” and “religious and moral values early childhood.” Data analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically, by identifying the main themes from various sources, comparing findings across sources, and then synthesizing them into a conceptual framework for integration-interconnection-based RMV learning in ECE. The overall research procedure, from the formulation of keywords to the synthesis of the conceptual framework, is summarised in Figure 1.

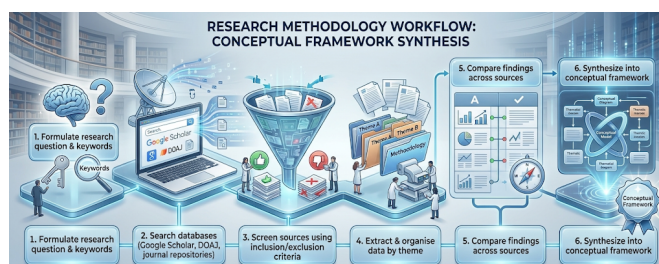


figure 1 Stages of the library research procedure

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Nature of Religious and Moral Values Learning in Early Childhood

Religious and moral values are one of the six developmental domains that constitute learning outcomes for early childhood, encompassing the introduction of God through His creations, the habituation of worship in accordance with the child's religion, and the formation of honesty, helpfulness, politeness, and respect toward parents, teachers, and others. Various studies show that the RMV cultivation strategies most commonly used by ECE educators include providing knowledge about God and religion, teacher role modeling, habituating good manners and character, and close collaboration between teachers and parents (Kholila & Khadijah, 2023). Role-play and storytelling methods have also proven effective in helping children understand abstract moral concepts through concrete and enjoyable experiences, although their effectiveness greatly depends on the teacher's creativity in packaging the material (Meilasari & Ichsan, 2024). Cultivating RMV also faces a number of obstacles, including unsupportive environmental conditions, limited understanding among some parents regarding religious education, and limited time spent together between parents and children (Erda et al., 2025). Internationally, cross-cultural studies also affirm that moral-religious education in early childhood is not merely a local issue but an important concern shared by educators and policymakers across various countries (Komalasari et al., 2023). Long-term research on parent-child interaction demonstrates that parents' everyday moral reasoning greatly influences children's behavior, both prosocial (helping) behavior and aggressive behavior. This reinforces that role modeling by adults around a child is the primary source of genuine moral learning (Essler & Paulus, 2022).

3.2 The Concept of Scientific Integration-Interconnection as a Learning Framework

The paradigm of scientific integration-interconnection was proposed by M. Amin Abdullah as a response to the sharp dichotomy between Islamic sciences and general sciences in Islamic educational institutions. This paradigm offers three metaphorical approaches to describe the relationship between disciplines: the tree-of-knowledge model (in which ushuluddin, sharia, and

other disciplines are depicted as branches growing from the same roots of revelation and reason), the spider-web model (in which every discipline is interconnected and cannot stand alone), and the twin-towers model (in which religious and general sciences stand side by side but are connected by bridges of interconnection). The essence of this paradigm is that religious and general sciences, like revelation and reason, should “engage with” one another, fill each other's gaps, and reinforce one another, rather than proceeding separately (Siswanto, 2024). When this paradigm is applied to early childhood education, integration-interconnection can be understood as an effort to weave religious and moral content together with other scientific content—science, language, art, and children's social life—into a single, unified learning experience. This is in line with the thematic-integrative learning principle that has long been applied in the ECE curriculum, namely combining various learning content into one theme that is meaningful for children, rather than teaching it separately and compartmentalized by subject (Ramdhani & Yuliasatri, 2018, as cited in a study on ECE curriculum approach strategies, *Jurnal Obsesi*). The holistic-integrative learning model in ECE also affirms that the development of children's basic potential, including their moral and spiritual values, will be more optimal when carried out comprehensively and integrated with other developmental aspects, rather than partially (Suarta & Rahayu, 2018). In other words, integration-interconnection in ECE RMV learning is not merely about attaching religious symbols to learning activities, but about building a web of meaning: children are guided to understand that recognizing the colors and shapes of leaves while gardening is also a way of recognizing God's greatness; that learning to count can be linked to the concept of order in God's creation; and that playing together with friends simultaneously serves as a means of practicing empathy and noble character (in line with the concept of integrative tauhid-based learning for early childhood, Lia & Khotimah, 2020).

3.3. Integration-Interconnection-Based RMV Learning in Early Childhood Education

There are a number of concrete strategies that ECE educators can use to realize RMV learning that is integrated and interconnected with other scientific content, among others as follows. Storytelling and value-laden digital media. Storytelling remains one of the most effective strategies for instilling religious and moral values, as it can present abstract concepts in a concrete and engaging way for children. The development of interactive learning media, such as story-based audio-graphic e-books, extends the reach of this method while also addressing the challenges of learning in the digital era, while still placing spiritual values at the core of the message conveyed (Tim Penulis Fikri, 2024). Role-play and traditional games. Role-play gives children the opportunity to directly practice moral values in social interaction, such as sharing, apologizing, and cooperating, while also training their social skills (Ilsa & Nurhafizah, 2020). Traditional games have also proven to be a distinctive and contextual vehicle for developing religious and moral values among Indonesian children (Lubis, 2023). Cross-activity habituation and role modeling. Daily worship habits, greetings, and everyday manners need to be woven together with other learning activities, so that they do not stand alone as mere memorized routines but become part of children's holistic learning experience—including through nature-based activities such as gardening linked to gratitude for God's creation (Lia & Khotimah, 2020). A holistic-integrative thematic approach. Teachers design learning themes that combine religious content with science, language, art, and social-emotional development within a single series of daily activities, in line with the holistic-integrative learning principle that constitutes one of Indonesia's national ECE policies (Suarta & Rahayu, 2018). Teacher-parent collaboration. Because religious and moral values are also shaped within the family environment, aligning perceptions between the school and parents is important so that children do not develop misunderstandings due to differences in family background (Anwar & Cholimah, 2023). This

collaboration is increasingly relevant in the digital era, as parents' digital parenting awareness also influences the pattern of children's interaction with technology (Toran et al., 2024).

3.4. Opportunities and Challenges

The implementation of integration-interconnection-based Religious and Moral Values (RMV) learning in ECE still faces several obstacles. First, some teachers still find it difficult to combine religious material with other sciences in depth, resulting in merely “attaching” religious terms to children's activities. Second, the selection of teaching methods that are not well-suited to children's age and developmental level risks making moral understanding shallow or even burdening children (Istiyani et al., 2024). Third, differences in teachers' generational backgrounds, such as the entry of Generation Z educators, are also changing mindsets and priorities in delivering material, requiring adjustments in learning planning (Jumiatmoko, 2022). On the other hand, advances in digital technology provide room for more modern and interactive RMV learning, such as the use of videos, educational games, and STEAM materials based on religious values (Khasanah et al., 2024). The presence of the latest ECE curriculum policy, which prioritizes the formation of religious character, presents a strategic opportunity to implement this integrated learning model comprehensively and systematically. Beyond these general opportunities and challenges, a closer, more critical reading of the reviewed literature suggests that the integration-interconnection paradigm carries specific limitations when transplanted from higher-education Islamic studies into ECE practice. First, the paradigm was originally formulated to reconcile revelation-based and reason-based disciplines at an abstract, epistemological level (Siswanto, 2024; Tajuddin & Awwaliyah, 2021); translating this abstraction into concrete daily activities for four-to-six-year-olds requires a pedagogical "downward translation" that existing conceptual studies, including this one, have not yet fully specified, so the risk of superficial application noted by Istiyani et al. (2024) is a structural limitation of the paradigm itself, not merely a matter of teacher skill. Second, the depth of implementation is likely to vary across educational contexts: findings from studies on STEAM-based and audio-graphic digital media (Khasanah et al., 2024; Fikri, 2024) point to schools with adequate technological infrastructure, whereas ECE institutions with limited resources, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, may only be able to adopt the simpler, habituation-based strategies described by Kholila and Khadijah (2023), so integration-interconnection is unlikely to be realised uniformly across urban, rural, public, and faith-based ECE settings. Third, most of the empirical evidence available concerns component strategies in isolation, such as role-play for social skills (Ilsa & Nurhafizah, 2020) or caregivers' everyday moral reasoning (Essler & Paulus, 2022), rather than the integration-interconnection model as a whole; consequently, this article's synthesis remains a conceptual proposition whose actual learning outcomes for children have not been empirically tested in ECE classrooms, and this absence of field-based validation is the principal limitation of the present study.

Table 1. Distribution of the 25 reviewed references by publication year and source type

Year of Publication	International Journal	National Journal	Books
2025	0	2	0
2024	1	9	1
2023	0	3	0
2022	1	2	1
2021	0	1	0
2020	0	2	0
2018	0	2	0
Total	2	21	2

IV. CONCLUSION

Learning in the developmental domain of Religious and Moral Values (RMV) in early childhood should not be taught separately from other developmental domains, but rather unified within a holistic and meaningful learning experience. The integration-interconnection paradigm conceived by M. Amin Abdullah, originally designed for Islamic higher education, has proven highly relevant when applied to ECE in order to eliminate the boundary between religious and general sciences. Through storytelling, role-play, daily habituation, a thematic-holistic approach, and strong collaboration between teachers and parents, religious values can be instilled alongside the introduction of science, language, art, and children's social life. Therefore, this study recommends several concrete actions. Curriculum developers are encouraged to embed integration-interconnection explicitly into ECE learning-outcome documents, for example by pairing each religious and moral values indicator with a corresponding science, language, art, or social-emotional indicator within the same weekly theme, rather than leaving the linkage implicit. Educators are encouraged to build a small repertoire of thematic-holistic activities, such as nature-based gardening linked to gratitude, storytelling paired with a simple science or counting task, and role-play that combines social skills with moral reasoning, and to document children's responses to these activities as a basis for reflective practice. Policymakers and teacher-training institutions are encouraged to provide structured professional development that equips teachers, including newly entering Generation Z educators, with practical tools for weaving religious content into other domains, together with simple guidelines for using digital media safely in RMV instruction. Finally, this study encourages further empirical research, including classroom-based action research or quasi-experimental studies, to test the effectiveness of this integration-interconnection model across diverse ECE institutions in Indonesia, including public, faith-based, urban, and rural settings.

V. REFERENCES

- Anwar, N. A. O., & Cholimah, N. (2023). Strategi Penanaman Nilai Agama dan Moral di PAUD. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(6), 6493-6504. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i6.4682>
- Dewi, C. S., Putri, M. A., & Amrillah, R. (2024). Integrasi Ilmu Keislaman dengan Ilmu Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini dalam Perspektif Muhammad Amin Abdullah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 1(3), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.47134/paud.v1i3.575>
- Erda, E., Rahmadania, R. A., Marlina, R., & Sari, W. A. (2025). Pengembangan Nilai Agama Dan Moral Anak Usia Dini di TK Pembina 1 Kota Bengkulu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9(1), 47507-47515. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v9i1.25611>
- Essler, S., & Paulus, M. (2022). Caregivers' everyday moral reasoning predicts young children's aggressive, prosocial, and moral development: Evidence from ambulatory assessment. *Infancy*, 27(6), 1068-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1111/infa.12493>
- Ilsa, F. N., & Nurhafizah, N. (2020). Penggunaan Metode Bermain Peran dalam Pengembangan Kemampuan Sosial Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 4(2), 1080-1090. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v4i2.571>
- Istiyani, D., Wibowo, A. M., Taruna, M. M., Rahmawati, T., & Atmanto, N. E. (2024). Challenges and Opportunities in Early Childhood Religious and Moral Education: A Perspective from the Evaluation of Logical Models. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 233-249. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4843>
- Jumiatmoko. (2022). Gen Z Teachers Candidates: Perspective on Early Childhood Moral Religious Values Development. *Child Education Journal*, 4(3), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.33086/cej.v4i3.3009>
- Karima, N. C., Ashilah, S. H., Kinasih, A. S., Taufiq, P. H., & Hasnah, L. (2022). Pentingnya penanaman nilai agama dan moral terhadap anak usia dini. *Yinyang: Jurnal Studi Islam, Gender, dan Anak*, 17(1).
- Khasanah, A. V., Yustantina, E. Y., & Yasin, M. F. (2024). Development of STEAM-Based Video Learning Media for Early Childhood Education with the Inclusion of Religious and Moral Values. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, 5(1), 136-152. <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i1.717>

- Kholila, A., & Khadijah, K. (2023). Optimalisasi Aspek Perkembangan Nilai Agama dan Moral pada Anak Usia Dini. *Murhum: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(1), 419-428. <https://doi.org/10.37985/murhum.v4i1.237>
- Lia, N. F. A., & Khotimah, D. S. (2020). Pembelajaran Integratif Berbasis Tauhid bagi Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Lentera Anak*, 1(01). <https://ejournal.unisnu.ac.id/jla/article/view/1567>
- Lubis, H. Z. (2023). Implementation of Traditional Games in Developing Religious and Moral Values in Early Childhood. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 11(2), 250-260.
- Meilasari, D., & Ichsan, I. (2024). Metode Penanaman Nilai Agama dan Moral pada Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(4), 789-795. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v8i4.3820>
- Mustofa, F. A., Arifi, A., & Muhtadi, M. (2024). Paradigma integrasi-interkoneksi dalam studi Islam di perguruan tinggi. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 9(1), 5061-5077.
- Ni Luh Draji, dkk. (2022). Stimulasi Perkembangan Agama dan Moral Anak Usia Dini (T. Lestari, Ed.). CV. Jakad Media Publishing.
- Nurul Ilmi Azizah, A., Nisa'ul Arifah, A., Wardani, A., Astutik, Wulandari, B., dkk. (2024). Perkembangan Nilai Agama dan Moral Anak Usia Dini. Penerbit Tahta Media.
- Ramdhani, S., & Yuliasri, N. A. (2018). Model Pembelajaran Tematik Integratif Untuk Membentuk Karakter Jujur Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Jurnal Pelita PAUD*, 2(2), 149-150. <https://doi.org/10.33222/pelitapaud.v2i2.226>
- Rofi'ah, S. H., & Fawaidi, B. (2025). Inclusivity of Pre-Learning Screening for Religious and Moral Values in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.23887/paud.v13i1.85543>
- Sa'adah Alwi, N., & Amril, M. (2024). Integrasi Agama dan Sains dalam Perspektif M. Amin Abdullah. *GHIROH*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.61966/ghiroh.v3i1.55>
- Siswanto. (2024). Perspektif Amin Abdullah tentang Integrasi Interkoneksi Dalam Kajian Islam. *Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, 12(1).
- Suarta, I. N., & Rahayu, D. I. (2018). Model Pembelajaran Holistik Integratif di PAUD untuk Mengembangkan Potensi Dasar Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v3i1.48>
- Tajuddin, T., & Awwaliyah, N. M. (2021). Paradigma Integrasi-Interkoneksi Islamisasi Ilmu Dalam Pandangan Amin Abdullah. *Aksiologi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Sosial*, 1(2), 56-61. <https://doi.org/10.47134/aksiologi.v1i2.11>
- Tim Penulis JEA. (2024). Strategi Guru dan Peran Orangtua dalam Pengembangan Agama dan Moral Anak di Era Digital. *Jurnal Edukasi AUD*, 10(2), 83-95.
- Tim Penulis Fikri. (2024). Interactive Learning of Religious Moral Values in Early Childhood Using Story-Based Audio Graphic E-Books. *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya*, 9(1).
- Toran, M., Kulaksiz, T., & Ozden, B. (2024). The Parent-Child Relationship in the Digital Era: The Mediator Role of Digital Parental Awareness. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2024.107617>