

## **FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AT AL AZHAR 22 SEMARANG**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's character, particularly in developing independence and responsibility as foundational life skills. This study aims to examine how these values are fostered in children at Al Azhar 22 Islamic Kindergarten Semarang through daily routines and social interactions. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving participant observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that independence is developed through consistent habituation of self-help activities, while responsibility is fostered through structured task assignments, social participation, and positive reinforcement. These processes can be categorized into three key dimensions: routine-based habituation, teacher-guided facilitation, and collaborative reinforcement between school and family. Supporting factors include consistent daily practices, the active role of teachers as facilitators, and strong parental involvement, whereas challenges involve children's fear of making mistakes, overprotective parenting, and limited task variation. The study concludes that the development of independence and responsibility is most effective when implemented through continuous experiential learning supported by structured routines and collaborative engagement between teachers and parents. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of character development processes in early childhood education, particularly within Islamic school contexts.

**Keywords:** *independence*, responsibility, early childhood education, character development

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## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education plays a vital role in the early stages of a child's development. During this period, children experience rapid growth in physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects (Lisnawati et al., 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2022). This phase is also crucial for shaping behaviors, values, and habits that influence children's future development (Handayani & Alam, 2025; Nurhayati et al., 2022). Therefore, early childhood education is not only aimed at preparing children academically, but also at strengthening character development as a foundation for holistic growth (Rahmawati & Wulandari, 2023).

In character development, independence and responsibility are two key values that are closely connected and equally important in a child's growth (Lastari et al., 2025; Salsabilla et al., 2024). Among various character values, independence and responsibility are two essential aspects that support children's personal and social development. Independence enables children to perform tasks according to their developmental stage without relying excessively on others, while responsibility helps children understand the consequences of their actions and their roles within a social environment (Amalia & Afrianingsih, 2023). Previous studies emphasize that social interaction and group activities contribute to the development of empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in children (Fitra et al., 2025). However, these studies tend to discuss these values separately and do not fully explain how independence and responsibility are developed simultaneously in everyday learning contexts.

Independence in early childhood can be understood as a child's ability to carry out daily activities without relying on others, in accordance with their age and stage of development (Lestari & Fathiyah, 2023; Lisrayanti & Fidesrinur, 2025). Independence in early childhood is not limited to the ability to perform daily activities, but also includes self-regulation and emotional maturity (Lastari et al., 2025; Paramitha, 2023). Research shows that direct experience and interaction-based activities play an important role in fostering independence and supporting children's social-emotional development (Novitasari, 2025). Furthermore, the internalization of character values through habitual practice is considered an effective approach in early childhood education. In addition, the internalization of character values is more effective when implemented through consistent habituation embedded in daily routines rather than through formal instruction alone (Alfiani & Khunaifi, 2025). This indicates that character development is a continuous process shaped through repeated experiences in meaningful contexts.

From the perspective of Islamic education, independence (*istiqlaliyah*) and responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) are integral components of moral (Fauzi & Nuraini, 2024; Handayani & Alam, 2025). The integration of moral and religious values into daily activities, supported by collaboration between teachers and parents, is considered essential for strengthening children's character (Netri, 2024). This highlights that character development is influenced not only by school practices but also by consistency between the school and family environments.

Although TK Islam Al Azhar 22 Semarang has implemented character-based learning through daily habituation practices (Lisnawati et al., 2024), existing studies have not sufficiently explored how independence and responsibility are developed simultaneously through structured routines and daily interactions. Previous research tends to focus on specific aspects of character development or isolated activities

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without providing an integrated understanding of how these values are formed in practice.

Based on these considerations, there is a research gap in understanding the integrated process of developing independence and responsibility in early childhood, particularly within Islamic educational settings. Therefore, this study aims to explore how these values are fostered through daily routines, identify supporting factors, and examine the challenges encountered in their implementation at TK Islam Al Azhar 22 Semarang. This study is expected to contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of character development processes in early childhood education.

## **METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The research was carried out over 45 days, from September 29, 2025, to November 12, 2025. The participants included 21 children from Group A3 at Al Azhar 22 Islamic Kindergarten in Semarang, two classroom teachers, and several parents who were directly engaged in the children's learning activities. The selection of participants was based on their relevance to the study and their active involvement in supporting the development of children's independence and sense of responsibility within the school setting. Data were collected using several methods, including:

1. Participant observation, in which the researcher takes part in daily learning activities in order to directly observe children's habits and behaviors during the process, the types of tasks assigned, and how independence and responsibility are fostered through various activities. This technique allows the researcher to gain an authentic understanding of children's behavior within the natural context of the learning environment.
2. Semi-structured interviews, conducted with teachers and parents to explore their perspectives, experiences, and evaluations regarding the development of children's independence and sense of responsibility throughout the learning process. This type of interview allows participants to share more in-depth information based on their individual experiences.
3. Document analysis, used as supporting data through the review of teachers' daily records, photographs of activities, and children's work portfolios. In this study, documentation serves to complement and strengthen the data obtained from observations and interviews. In addition, the collected documents help provide a more comprehensive picture of how character development is implemented within the school environment.

In this study, data analysis was carried out using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was conducted continuously from the initial data collection until the completion of the study, allowing each piece of information to be processed and interpreted step by step. To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from teachers, parents, and observational findings. Furthermore, the results were discussed through a reflective process with the

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participants to confirm that the interpretations accurately represented the actual conditions in the field.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **a. The Emergence of Children's Independence**

Based on the findings, children's independence at TK Islam Al Azhar 22 Semarang develops through consistent daily routines implemented in the school environment. Children demonstrate self-help skills such as putting on and removing their shoes, placing their bags in designated lockers, taking and returning lunch boxes, and tidying up toys after use without direct instructions from the teacher.

Independence is also evident during break time activities, where children are able to prepare their eating mats, manage their meals independently, and clean up after finishing. These behaviors develop gradually as children are given opportunities to complete tasks independently before receiving assistance from the teacher.

In addition, children show increased confidence and the ability to regulate themselves when facing simple challenges. This indicates that independence is not only related to physical ability but also involves emotional readiness and self-regulation in completing daily activities.

### **b. The Development of Children's Sense of Responsibility**

The findings indicate that children's sense of responsibility develops through structured task assignments carried out regularly. Children are involved in activities such as distributing learning materials, tidying up classroom equipment, collecting books, and helping peers who experience difficulties.

Children demonstrate responsibility through their ability to complete assigned tasks and show awareness of their roles in maintaining the classroom environment. They also display positive responses, such as enthusiasm and a sense of pride, when given responsibilities by the teacher.

Responsibility is further reflected in group activities that require cooperation and interaction. Through these activities, children begin to understand that their actions have an impact on others, indicating the development of social awareness and responsibility.

### **c. Supporting Factors**

The findings reveal several factors that support the development of independence and responsibility. Consistent daily routines help children understand expected behaviors and form positive habits. Teachers act as facilitators by providing guidance, encouragement, and opportunities for children to complete tasks independently. In addition, collaboration between school and parents strengthens the continuity of character development, as similar practices are reinforced at home.

### **d. Challenges**

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Some children show fear of making mistakes, which limits their willingness to act independently. Overprotective parenting also reduces children's opportunities to develop independence. In addition, limited variation in tasks affects children's motivation to actively participate in activities.

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## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that children's independence is developed through consistent habituation and direct involvement in daily activities. This supports the view of (Lestari & Fathiyah, 2023; Paramitha, 2023), which emphasize that repeated practice in daily routines plays an important role in fostering independent behavior in early childhood. Independence, in this context, is not only related to the ability to perform tasks but also to children's emotional readiness and self-regulation, as highlighted by (Paramitha, 2023). Furthermore, the findings show that experiential learning and direct interaction contribute significantly to children's independence. This is in line with (Novitasari, 2025) which explains that activities involving interaction and real experiences support children's social-emotional development. The role of habituation in shaping character is also consistent with (Alfiani & Khunaifi, 2025) which state that moral values are effectively internalized through repeated daily activities.

The development of responsibility observed in this study also aligns with previous research. The use of simple and structured task assignments supports children's understanding of their roles in a social environment, as stated by (Puspitasari et al., 2023). In addition, the sense of pride and motivation shown by children when given responsibilities reflects the importance of positive reinforcement, as emphasized by (Fidiawati et al., 2021; Syifa et al., 2022). Group activities further strengthen children's sense of responsibility by encouraging cooperation and social awareness. This finding is consistent with (Ulfah et al., 2023), which highlight that collaborative activities contribute to the development of social responsibility in early childhood.

The role of teachers as facilitators is also a key factor in the development of independence and responsibility. This finding supports (Amalia et al., 2024; N. Paramitha, 2023; Salsabilla et al., 2024), which emphasize that teacher guidance and role modeling are crucial in shaping children's character. Teachers who provide opportunities and support create a learning environment that encourages children to act independently and responsibly. This is further supported by (Ulya & Cholimah, 2024), which state that teachers as facilitators can effectively support character development.

In addition, collaboration between school and parents strengthens the process of character development. This finding is in line with (Salsabilla et al., 2024; Ulya & Cholimah, 2024), which highlight the importance of synergy between school and family. The integration of moral values in daily routines, as explained by (Netri, 2024), further supports the effectiveness of character development through consistent practice in both environments.

However, the challenges identified in this study indicate that children's development is influenced by both internal and external factors. Fear of making mistakes may hinder children's confidence, as noted by (Paramitha, 2023). Overprotective parenting can limit opportunities for children to develop independence, as explained by (Amalia & Wulandari, 2024). In addition, limited variation in tasks may reduce children's motivation, highlighting the need for more innovative and varied learning strategies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that independence and responsibility are developed through an integrated process involving habituation, social interaction, teacher facilitation, and parental collaboration. This provides a more comprehensive

understanding of character development in early childhood, particularly within the context of Islamic education.



Figure 1. Model of Independence and Responsibility Development in Early Childhood at Al Azhar 22 Semarang

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of independence and responsibility in early childhood at TK Islam Al Azhar 22 Semarang is achieved through consistent habituation, structured task assignments, and supportive teacher facilitation. Independence is developed through self-help activities embedded in daily routines, while responsibility is fostered through social interaction, task involvement, and positive reinforcement. These processes are strengthened by the role of teachers as facilitators, consistent school routines, and collaboration with parents.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding that independence and responsibility are not developed separately but are formed simultaneously through an integrated process involving habituation, social interaction, and environmental support. This finding enriches the perspective of early childhood character education by emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and the interaction between school and family contexts.

Practically, this study implies that early childhood education institutions should design structured daily routines, provide meaningful task assignments, and create supportive learning environments that encourage children to act independently and responsibly. In addition, active collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to ensure the consistency of character development both at school and at home.

However, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted within a limited setting involving a specific group of children in one institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the focus on qualitative data limits the measurement of the extent of children's development quantitatively.

Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a wider range of participants and educational settings, as well as to integrate quantitative approaches to measure the effectiveness of character development programs. Further studies

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may also explore more innovative strategies and intervention models to enhance independence and responsibility in early childhood education.

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