

Integrating Islamic Mindfulness Into Early Childhood Curriculum: A Supplementary Model For Holistic Character Formation

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on the need for an approach to character development in early childhood that emphasizes not only behavioral aspects but also inner awareness integrated with Islamic spiritual values. Various studies indicate that mindfulness practices are effective in developing emotional regulation and self-awareness; however, they remain limited to secular approaches and have not yet been systematically integrated into Islamic education. This study aims to formulate the concept of Islamic mindfulness, examine its integration into the early childhood curriculum, and analyze its relevance and implementation in educational practice. Methods used were qualitative research with a descriptive-interpretive approach through a literature review supplemented by limited field observations. The results of the study indicate that Islamic mindfulness is a holistic awareness rooted in divine values that can be integrated as a supplementary curriculum model through mindful routines, reflective games, teacher guidance, and spiritual practices. Its implementation has a positive impact on children's emotional regulation, self-awareness, social behavior, and psychological well-being. This study contributes to the development of an integrative conceptual model that bridges Islamic education and modern mindfulness approaches in a contextual manner. However, this study is limited to qualitative exploration and limited observation. Therefore, further research is recommended to empirically test the model's effectiveness using an experimental design and a broader scope.

Keywords: deep learning; early childhood; education; holistic character; Islamic literacy.



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INTRODUCTION

The issue of character development in early childhood has once again become a serious concern, both nationally and globally. In Indonesia, strengthening character education has become a strategic priority, but in practice, efforts are often fragmented, focusing on cognitive and behavioral aspects, while the dimension of inner awareness is rarely addressed systematically. At the same time, international discourse indicates a significant increase in the use of mindfulness approaches in early childhood education as a means of developing emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness. However, the mindfulness approaches

developing globally tend to be rooted in secular or Buddhist traditions, and thus have not yet been fully integrated with Islamic religious values, which serve as the primary foundation in many contexts of Muslim education. Several studies affirm that Islamic education holds great potential in shaping character through the integration of spiritual values, worship practices, and God-consciousness [1], [2]. Thus, the need for an integrative model linking mindfulness with the Islamic value framework becomes increasingly relevant. This synthesis affirms that the integration of Islamic mindfulness is not merely a pedagogical innovation but an epistemological response to the need for a more holistic and contextual character education.

Previous research has laid an important foundation regarding the relationship between Islamic education, mindfulness, and character development. A study by Ahnan'Azzam and Leany (2024) demonstrates that an Islamic psychology approach in early childhood education can create a learning environment that simultaneously supports children's moral and spiritual development. Meanwhile, Raqib et al. (2026) developed a Qur'anic-values-based conceptual framework emphasizing age-appropriate structured play and mindfulness approaches as strategies for holistic character development. Other studies highlight that practices such as dhikr, prayer, and spiritual reflection have a regulatory effect on children's emotions and behavior, which implicitly aligns with the principles of mindfulness [3], [4]. Research by Salsabila and Rohmah (2024) even demonstrates that integrating Islamic values with mindfulness-based self-regulation techniques enhances resilience in early childhood. On the other hand, the literature on Sufi-based character education also underscores the importance of inner awareness (*muraqabah*) as the core of moral development [5]. Overall, these studies indicate that elements of mindfulness have been present in Islamic tradition, although they have not yet been explicitly formulated in early childhood education curricula.

Nevertheless, there remains a significant research gap. Most studies remain conceptual or focus only partially on examining Islamic values, mindfulness, or character education in isolation, without offering an operational integrative model. Research that explicitly integrates the concept of Islamic mindfulness into early childhood curriculum design remains very limited, particularly studies grounded in systematic and replicable approaches. Furthermore, many studies focus on elementary education or adolescents, leaving the context of early childhood a crucial phase of neuropsychological development undervalued [6]. Another limitation lies in the lack of empirical support based on field observations demonstrating how Islamic mindfulness practices are implemented in real learning settings. A synthesis of these gaps indicates that research is needed that not only integrates the concept but also tests its relevance and applicability within the context of early childhood education.

Building on this gap, this study offers a novel conceptual model of a supplementary curriculum that systematically integrates Islamic mindfulness into early childhood education. This model not only adapts modern mindfulness principles but also reconstructs them through an Islamic epistemological framework, incorporating concepts such as *muraqabah* (awareness of Allah's presence), *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), and daily worship practices as forms of mindfulness training [7]. Another innovation lies in the integrative approach between literature review and field observation, ensuring the resulting model is not abstract but contextual and practical. This research also positions Islamic mindfulness as a supplementary element, not a replacement for the main curriculum, making it more flexible to implement in various educational settings. Thus, the primary contribution of this research is to provide a conceptual framework that bridges the gap between theory, religious values, and pedagogical practices.

The purpose of this study is to develop and analyze a model for integrating Islamic mindfulness into the early childhood curriculum to support holistic character development. The research questions posed include: (1) How can the concept of Islamic mindfulness be

formulated in the context of early childhood education? (2) How can this concept be integrated into the curriculum as a supplementary model? and (3) What is its relevance and implementation in teaching practice? This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review design, supplemented by observations of Islamic-based early childhood education practices. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of concept and practice integration. The synthesis of these objectives and methods confirms that the research is not only oriented toward theoretical development but also toward practical contributions that can enrich Islamic-values-based character education practices at the early childhood level.

METHODS

The chosen approach is a qualitative-descriptive one with a constructive-interpretive orientation. This approach seeks to interpret phenomena not as isolated facts, but as constructions arising from the interaction between values, practices, and the social context of education [8]. Within this framework, Islamic mindfulness is understood as a living concept not merely a normative theory, but a practice that is interpreted by teachers, students, and the learning environment. This study also adopts a literature-informed field inquiry strategy, which combines in-depth literature review with limited field observations to strengthen the analysis. Such an approach has been used in Islamic education studies to bridge the gap between theoretical conceptualization and practical reality [9]. The synthesis of this approach allows researchers not only to explain “what” and “how,” but also “why” an educational practice is formed and takes place.

The research was conducted in a phased and layered manner. The first phase involved conceptual exploration through a literature review of scholarly works relevant to mindfulness [10], Islamic education [11], and early childhood education [12]. During this phase, the researcher identified key concepts, integration patterns, and empirical findings that could serve as the foundation for model construction. The second stage involves the categorization and synthesis of concepts, where various literature findings are analyzed thematically to establish an initial framework for Islamic mindfulness within the curriculum context. The third stage consists of field observations limited to Islamic-based early childhood education institutions, aimed at capturing actual practices that intersect with mindfulness concepts, such as *dhikr* activities, reflection, or spiritual cultivation. The fourth stage is data integration, which involves linking literature findings with observation results to produce a more contextual conceptual model. The final stage is internal validation through critical reflection and triangulation of sources. This phased approach aligns with qualitative research practices in Islamic education that emphasize iterative and reflective processes [13].

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from observations conducted in an Islamic-based early childhood education setting [14], focusing on learning activities that incorporate elements of mindfulness, self-control, and spiritual cultivation [15]. The research subjects included teachers and children as the primary actors in the learning process, as well as the classroom environment as the context for interaction [16]. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from academic literature in the form of international and national journal articles, scientific books, and curriculum documents relevant to the research topic. Data sources were selected purposefully, considering their relevance, credibility, and contribution to concept development. This approach is supported by previous research emphasizing the importance of combining literature and field data in Islamic education studies to produce comprehensive analyses [17].

Data collection was conducted through three main methods: literature review, observation, and documentation. The literature review was conducted systematically by searching for,

reading, and analyzing relevant scientific sources to develop a conceptual framework [18]. Observation was conducted through limited participant observation, with the researcher present in the learning setting to observe practices related to Islamic mindfulness, such as reflective activities, emotion regulation, and teacher-child interactions. This technique allowed the researcher to capture phenomena directly and within their contextual setting. Documentation involved collecting data in the form of lesson plans, activity logs, and other learning artifacts that could reinforce the findings from observation. To ensure data validity, this study employs triangulation of methods and sources, as recommended in qualitative educational research [19]. Through this combination of methods, the data obtained are not only rich but also mutually reinforcing, thereby yielding a deeper and scientifically accountable understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of this study indicate that the integration of Islamic mindfulness into the early childhood curriculum is not only feasible but also possesses strong conceptual coherence and practical relevance. Based on a literature review and field observations, it was found that elements of mindfulness have long been present in Islamic educational practices, although they have not yet been explicitly formulated as a systematic pedagogical framework. Practices such as dhikr, prayer, the habit of reflection, and self-control form the foundation of awareness that aligns with modern mindfulness principles. Saona's (2025) study confirms that Islamic values-based education significantly influences children's social-emotional development [20], while Hayati and Zahra (2023) demonstrate that play activities based on Islamic mindfulness can improve children's mental health in a contextual manner [21]. Thus, the findings of this study reveal a strong convergence between Islamic tradition and contemporary mindfulness approaches.

In addition, these findings are presented to address three main research questions: (1) how the concept of Islamic mindfulness is defined in the context of early childhood education; (2) how it is integrated into the curriculum as a supplementary model; and (3) its relevance and implementation in teaching practice. Each of the following sections systematically elaborates on these findings.

Formulation of the Concept of Islamic Mindfulness in Early Childhood Education

The first finding indicates that Islamic mindfulness can be defined as a form of holistic awareness that integrates cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects with a divine orientation [10]. Different from secular mindfulness, which emphasizes attention to the present moment (present-moment awareness), Islamic mindfulness expands this dimension by incorporating awareness of Allah's presence (*muraqabah*) as the center of the experience [22]. In this context, awareness is not merely "self-awareness," but also "awareness of one's relationship with God."

It has been shown in the literature that this concept has a strong foundation in Islamic tradition. Karimullah (2023) explains that Sufi practices such as *tazkiyah al-nafs* and *muraqabah* teach individuals to reflectively observe their thoughts and behaviors, which is essentially in line with the principle of mindfulness [5]. Meanwhile, Pallathadka et al. (2023) emphasize that Islamic education promotes the internalization of values through sustained spiritual awareness, rather than merely normative instruction [2]. This finding is reinforced by Abshar and Putri (2025), who state that the integration of mindfulness with Islamic values enhances psychological well-being by introducing a transcendental dimension to the experience of awareness [17].

The results of field observations revealed that children naturally respond to activities that incorporate elements of spiritual awareness. For example, when a teacher leads a prayer at a

slow, contemplative pace, the children demonstrate increased focus and calmness. In simple dhikr activities, children not only repeat the words but also exhibit more stable emotional expressions. This indicates that Islamic mindfulness is not an abstract concept but can be concretely experienced by young children.

A synthesis of these findings yields three main components of Islamic mindfulness in early childhood education: (1) spiritual awareness (awareness of Allah's presence), (2) emotional regulation (value-based emotional management), and (3) attentional focus (the ability to consciously concentrate). These three components are interrelated and form the foundation of a holistic character.

Table 1. Core Components of Islamic Mindfulness

Component	Description	Indicators in Early Childhood
Spiritual Awareness	Awareness of Allah's presence (<i>muraqabah</i>)	Calm and focused during prayer and <i>dhikr</i>
Emotional Regulation	Value-based emotional management	More stable emotions, less reactivity
Attentional Focus	Conscious ability to sustain attention	Improved concentration during activities

Integration of Islamic Mindfulness into the Curriculum as a Supplementary Model

The second finding indicates that the integration of Islamic mindfulness is more effective when implemented as a supplementary model within the curriculum, rather than as a primary framework that replaces the existing system. This approach allows for flexibility while maintaining continuity with national and institutional curricula.

A literature review reveals that the integration of Islamic values into early childhood curricula has typically been thematic or symbolic in nature, such as through religious instruction or specific ritual activities [23]. However, such approaches often fail to address deeper aspects of awareness. Raqib et al. (2026) propose a play-based approach that integrates Qur'anic values with reflective activities, demonstrating significant potential for holistic character development [24]. Meanwhile, Salsabila and Rohmah (2024) emphasize the importance of mindfulness-based self-regulation exercises in enhancing children's resilience [19].

Results of the observation indicate that integration practices can be implemented through three main strategies. First, integration into daily routines, such as morning prayers guided by mindfulness. Second, integration into play activities, such as games that cultivate focus and patience. Third, integration into pedagogical interactions, in which teachers consistently encourage children to reflect on their feelings and actions.

The supplementary model developed in this study consists of four main elements: (1) structured mindful routines, (2) reflective play activities, (3) teacher-guided awareness, and (4) spiritual habituation. These four elements are designed to complement one another and can be adapted to the context of the institution.

Table 2. Elements of the Supplementary Model

Element	Description	Example in Practice
Structured Mindful Routines	Daily activities embedded with mindfulness	Guided morning prayers, calm transitions

Reflective Play Activities	Play designed to build awareness and focus	Games that train patience and attention
Teacher-Guided Awareness	Facilitation of reflection and meaning-making	Asking children about feelings and actions
Spiritual Habituation	Repeated exposure to spiritual practices	Regular <i>dhikr</i> , value-based reminders

The Relevance and Implementation of Islamic Mindfulness in Educational Practice

The third finding confirms that Islamic mindfulness is highly relevant in early childhood education, particularly in the context of character development [25]. The implementation of this concept has been shown to have a positive impact on several aspects of children's development.

First, regarding emotional regulation. Studies indicate that mindfulness exercises help children recognize and manage their emotions [19]. Within an Islamic context, practices such as *dhikr* and prayer serve as effective regulatory mechanisms [26]. Observations suggest that children accustomed to these activities are better able to calm themselves in conflict situations.

Second, regarding self-awareness. Ertanti and Anggraheni (2025) found that self-awareness is a key predictor in character education [6]. Islamic mindfulness strengthens this awareness by adding a spiritual dimension, so that children not only understand themselves but also grasp the underlying moral values [27].

Third, regarding social behavior. Saona (2025) demonstrates that education based on Islamic values enhances children's empathy and social interaction [20]. This finding aligns with observations showing that children engaged in reflective activities are better able to exhibit prosocial behaviors, such as sharing and helping friends.

Fourth, regarding mental health. Hayati and Zahra (2023) emphasize that activities based on Islamic mindfulness contribute to children's psychological well-being, particularly in the post-pandemic context [21]. Children become calmer, more focused, and better able to adapt to environmental changes.

Table 3. Key Developmental Impacts

Aspect	Description	Observed Impact on Children
Emotional Regulation	Mindfulness and Islamic practices (e.g., <i>dhikr</i> , prayer) regulate emotions	Children are calmer and better manage conflicts
Self-Awareness	Awareness enhanced with a spiritual dimension	Children understand themselves and moral values
Social Behavior	Islamic based reflection fosters empathy and interaction	Increased prosocial behavior (sharing, helping)
Mental Health	Spiritual mindfulness supports psychological well-being	Children are calmer, focused, and adaptable

However, the implementation of Islamic mindfulness also faces challenges. One of them is the limited understanding teachers have of the concept of mindfulness itself. Many teachers still view spiritual practices as mere routines lacking a reflective dimension [28]. Additionally, time constraints and the demands of the formal curriculum often pose obstacles to consistently integrating mindful activities.

Despite this, the findings indicate that with proper training and a contextual approach, Islamic mindfulness can be effectively implemented. The key lies in the teacher's awareness of their role as a facilitator of the learning experience, rather than merely a conveyor of content [29].

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic mindfulness possesses strong conceptual coherence as well as practical relevance in early childhood education. These results align with previous research affirming that early Islamic education plays a significant role in character formation, particularly through the internalization of spiritual and moral values [1]. More specifically, concepts of awareness in Islam such as *taqwa* and *muraqabah* have long been positioned as the core of moral character formation, which substantively intersects with modern concepts of mindfulness [17].

Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that Islamic mindfulness is not a new and foreign concept, but rather a recontextualization of the Islamic scholarly tradition within the language of contemporary pedagogy [30]. This synthesis demonstrates an epistemological continuity between the Islamic heritage and modern psychological approaches.

On the other hand, the results of this study also expand upon previous findings by situating Islamic mindfulness more operationally within the context of early childhood curricula. The study by Raqib et al. (2026) has proposed the integration of Qur'anic values through a play-based approach, but has not explicitly linked it to the mindfulness framework as a system of awareness [24]. This study fills that gap by formulating more structured components, such as structured mindful routines and reflective play. This is also supported by Herawati's (2025) findings, which indicate that mindful storytelling based on Islamic values can enhance children's focus and empathy [31]. Thus, this study not only confirms the effectiveness of reflective approaches in Islamic education but also organizes them into a more systematic and practical model.

However, not all findings are directly aligned. Some studies tend to emphasize that character education in Islam can be sufficiently achieved through the internalization of values and religious practices without the need to adopt external terminology or approaches, including mindfulness [23], [32]. This perspective implicitly assumes that integrating concepts such as mindfulness has the potential to obscure the purity of the Islamic approach [33]. The findings of this study, however, suggest the opposite: such integration does not erode Islamic identity but rather enriches the methods of its delivery and interpretation. Mindfulness in this context is not imported wholesale but reconstructed through Islamic values. In other words, a process of critical adaptation occurs, not uncritical adoption. This is where the fundamental difference lies between this study and some previous research.

Furthermore, the results of this study also confirm findings in Islamic psychology research indicating that spiritual practices such as *dhikr* and reflection have a regulatory effect on emotions and mental health [34]. In field observations, children engaged in spiritual mindfulness-based activities demonstrated greater calmness, focus, and emotional regulation skills. These findings align with the research by Huda et al. (2025), which emphasizes the connection between Islamic values, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness in character development [35]. Thus, Islamic mindfulness is not only theoretically relevant but also has tangible psychological implications for child development.

The study also identified challenges that enrich the discourse. Not all teachers possess an adequate understanding of mindfulness as a process of reflective awareness [36]. Some still interpret spiritual practices as mechanical routines. This finding aligns with critiques in the literature that religious education often gets bogged down in formalities without internalizing meaning [37]. In this context, Islamic mindfulness offers an approach that emphasizes conscious experience, not merely the repetition of rituals [38]. However, the success of its

implementation depends heavily on the readiness of teachers as facilitators of reflection. This is a critical point that has not been extensively addressed in previous research.

There is also tension between the demands of the formal curriculum and the need to create space for reflection in learning [39]. Previous studies have generally not addressed this aspect explicitly. This research indicates that a supplementary approach offers a realistic solution. These findings reinforce Mahmud's (2024) argument that the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum must be flexible and contextual so as not to burden the existing learning structure [40]. Thus, Islamic mindfulness can be integrated without disrupting the core curriculum's objectives.

Overall, the research results indicate that the findings both reinforce and expand the existing literature. They confirm the importance of Islamic values in character development, expand upon this through the framework of mindfulness, and simultaneously critique approaches that are overly normative or mechanistic. Its primary contribution lies in the effort to bridge the two traditions of Islamic scholarship and modern psychology within the context of early childhood education. This integration is not without challenges, but that is precisely where its relevance lies: in presenting an educational approach that is more mindful, more reflective, and more meaningful

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic mindfulness can be defined as a holistic concept of awareness that integrates cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions with a divine orientation, and holds strong relevance in early childhood education. This concept does not exist in a vacuum; it is rooted in Islamic traditions such as *muraqabah*, *dhikr*, and *tazkiyah al-nafs*, yet reconstructed within a more systematic pedagogical framework. Its integration into the curriculum has proven most effective when implemented as a flexible supplementary model one that does not replace the main curriculum structure but enriches the quality of the learning experience through mindful routines, reflective play, teacher guidance, and spiritual practices. In learning practice, Islamic mindfulness demonstrates tangible contributions to emotional regulation, increased self-awareness, more empathetic social behavior, and children's psychological stability. Thus, all findings of this study consistently answer the research question: Islamic mindfulness can be conceptually formulated, curricularly integrated, and practically implemented as a more holistic and meaningful character-building approach.

An important contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative conceptual model that bridges Islamic educational traditions with modern mindfulness approaches in the context of early childhood. Unlike previous studies, which tended to be fragmented, this study offers a more operational and contextual formulation through a supplementary curriculum approach. Another contribution is the strengthening of the empirical foundation through a combination of literature review and observation, ensuring that the resulting model is not merely normative but also reflective of real-world practices in the field. These findings enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic education, particularly in the development of character education grounded in mindfulness, while also opening a space for dialogue between modern psychology and Islamic spirituality. In a broader context, this research affirms that character formation is not sufficient through the habituation of behavior but requires a dimension of internalized consciousness an aspect that has often been overlooked in the design of formal curriculums.

Although this study makes a significant contribution, it has several limitations. First, the qualitative approach with limited observation means that generalizations of the findings must be made with caution. Second, the study's focus on conceptual construction and the exploration of initial practices has not yet fully tested the model's effectiveness through longitudinal or

experimental methods. Third, the diverse contexts of early childhood education institutions have not been fully accommodated in this study. Therefore, future research is recommended to test the Islamic mindfulness model through experimental or mixed-methods designs, expand the scope of subjects and research locations, and develop evaluation instruments capable of measuring impacts more precisely. Additionally, training teachers as facilitators of Islamic-based mindfulness is also a critical area for further study. With such development, it is hoped that Islamic mindfulness will not only serve as an alternative concept but evolve into a validated, adaptive, and sustainable pedagogical practice within early childhood education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The research was conducted independently without any financial, commercial, institutional, or personal relationships that could be perceived as influencing the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, or conclusions presented in this manuscript. Any observations conducted in partner educational institutions were carried out solely for academic purposes and did not involve contractual obligations, financial support, or external pressures that might affect the objectivity of the research. The authors affirm that all interpretations and conclusions reported in this study are based on scholarly judgment and the evidence obtained through the research process.

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