



## Strengthening The Religious and Honest Character of Students Through Tazkiyatun Nafs Guidance at Early Childhood Education

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to examine and analyze the enhancement of students' religious and honest character through tazkiyatun nafs guidance in early childhood education settings. It employs a field research design, with data collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that, first, religious character constitutes one of the key values cultivated in early childhood education, this character comes from Islamic teachings to Enhancing one's relationship with God Almighty encompasses students' thoughts, speech, and actions, all of which are consistently guided by religious values and principles. Through tazkiyatun nafs efforts, such as students being trained to pray, sholat, say greetings, read basmalah and hamdalah religious and honest characters are instilled in them, because prayer embedded divine values and at the same time the value of honesty; second, A fundamental objective of formal education is to cultivate honesty among students, because honesty is the basic capital in life.*

**Keywords:** Religious; Character; Honest; Tazkiyatun Nafs.



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### INTRODUCTION

The development of honesty significantly contributes to students' success in various aspects academic achievement, because with an honest attitude it will bring out truth and trust from social responses, thus fostering a person's positive view of himself (an honest person). Honesty is an important value that must be owned by someone. According to his perspective, honesty is not limited to spoken words but must be manifested in everyday conduct, encompassing truthfulness, transparency, refraining from dishonesty, and compliance with prevailing regulations (Hakim, 2019).

The Law on the National Education System Number 20 of 2003 Chapter II Article 3 states that national education functions to develop capabilities and form dignified national character and civilization in order to educate the nation's life, which aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God. God Almighty, has noble character, is healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and becomes a democratic and responsible citizen. Character building which is an effort to realize the mandate of Pancasila and the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution is motivated by the reality of current

national problems, Such challenges encompass shifts in moral values within society and governance, diminishing appreciation of cultural heritage, potential fragmentation of the nation, and reduced strength of national autonomy (Mujizatullah, 2016) .

Strengthening and instilling moral values in students can be done through education. Education is oriented towards the formation of the perfect human (*insan kamil*) in whose soul human and divine characters are embedded. Such a human being has been reflected in the Prophet Muhammad SAW. as *uswah hasanah* as well as ideal references to Islamic education with its various characters. This shows that all the characters that are broken down in the behavior, attitudes and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. is a representation of the Koran which needs to be used as a way of life (Hayati, 2018) .

Teachers serve as key agents in the development of national civilization, bearing the responsibility to cultivate and strengthen learners' personal character, morality, and intellectual capabilities of this nation's young generation. The task of civilization is very influential on the future of the nation. In essence, starting from the teacher, students get to know knowledge, values, ethics, morals, enthusiasm, and the outside world that is still foreign to them (Nuryanto & Subandi, 2021) .

Strengthening moral values is not just transforming knowledge, but also influencing and encouraging students to form a holy life by producing goodness and virtues that bring benefits. This can also be interpreted as forming a noble person who has good morals through three aspects, namely physical, mental and spiritual aspects. Of course by instilling positive values such as honesty, simplicity, humility, trust, gratitude, kindness, compassion, generosity, self-care and tongue. If all of this is fulfilled and applied in everyday life, a moral personality will be formed (Ruhama', 2016) .

At-Tazkiyah (purification), in Arabic comes from the word *zaka*-*yazkuu*-*zaka*'an, which means holy, At- Tazkiyah means growing, holy, and blessing. Etymologically the soul has several meanings, the most prominent of which is. (1) Soul means Spirit. When it is said "the soul comes out", then what is meant is the spirit. (2) The soul means something and its essence, if it is said, "He kills his soul and his soul perishes". Tazkiyatun nafs does not only have the principle of cleansing the soul from all heart ailments but also coaching and developing a positive soul, one of which is the birth of an honest attitude (Hakim, 2019) .

A range of research has explored tazkiyatun nafs as a means of strengthening teachers' personal competencies, among them: first, the results of the study by Prasetio, J. E., (2017) reveal that the concept of accountability is laden with rationality values, so tazkiyatun is necessary nafs (purification of the soul) based on Islam. Islam provides a place for spiritual aspects and physical aspects in a balanced way. Soul and spirituality is the deepest part of man that connects man with God. Tazkiyatun nafs guidance through the habituation method by the counselor, positions the assistant guide as a reminder of the inner order which has its own rules. Physiological and psychological conditions are the essential basis of human personality. Then through the spiritual method, namely the concept of tazkiyatun nafs , invites students to return to their natural state through habituation.

To provide relevant references related to strengthening the religious and honest character of students, the researcher presents the results of Mumun Mulyati's study (2020) that forming religious character in children through the habit of praying is very effective, in prayer there is a learning process about honesty , with the process of combining words with deeds or between statements and reality. There is a process of combining *takbirotul ihram* by raising both hands, bowing and even prostrating. While indicators of honesty in children can be seen when hanging out with other people.

Meanwhile, another study was by Hariandi, A (2020) which stated that an honest attitude needs to be instilled by parents and educators in children as early as possible. Given the importance of being honest in this modern era, especially in the elementary school

environment. Furthermore, the findings of Futihat (2020) highlight that honesty constitutes an essential quality for students. This underscores the need for pedagogical innovation to reshape existing habits. The application of group-oriented character education has proven beneficial, as it supports students in gradually adopting honest behavior in different contexts.

In light of the above explanation, the researcher expresses an interest in investigating this topic studying tazkiyatun nafs which can strengthen the religious and honest character of students. There is anxiety in the author's mind about what causes this discrepancy phenomenon to occur, and how solutions are offered to overcome these problems. The point is how the strategy is to strengthen the religious and honest character of students in early childhood through the Islamic concept, namely through the tazkiyatun nafs approach.

## METHOD

The research was conducted at PAUD Nurul Furqon Demak with field research, namely studies that are directly carried out in the field or on respondents. Researchers used a qualitative descriptive study method. This means research that provides an overview or description of a situation as clearly as possible regarding objects, whether in the form of human cultural values, artistic values, certain groups, events, or other cultural objects. In this context, efforts are made to observe problems systematically and accurately regarding facts and the nature of certain objects.

The principal data sources include both observable activities and verbal information gathered in the field, as well as additional sources in the form of documents, the rest is additional data, namely written data sources, photos and so on. Sources of data taken by researchers through words and actions or observations include: strengthening the religious and honest character of students through tazkiyatun nafs guidance at early childhood education. The study employed observation, interviews, and documentation as techniques for data collection. Data analysis followed the interactive framework of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, conducted continuously until saturation was reached. The procedures comprised data condensation, data presentation, and the formulation of conclusions, focusing on efforts to enhance students' religious and honest character through tazkiyatun nafs practices in early childhood education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Character Concept

Character education encompasses a broader scope than moral education, as it goes beyond merely distinguishing between right and wrong. It emphasizes the cultivation of habitual ethical behavior, encouraging individuals to consistently practice what is considered right in their daily lives. About what is good and bad, being able to feel good values and being able to do it. So education about what is good and bad, being able to feel good grades and being able to do it. So character education is closely related to habits that are continuously carried out.

Table 1. Research Instrument of Religious Character

No.	Observation Aspect	Observation Result
1.	Value of worship	Most children can already value of worship by getting used to simple things like praying, telling stories about Islamic figures and carrying out activities related to religious characters such as using blocks in the mosque and has developed very well

No.	Observation Aspect	Observation Result
2.	Discipline values	Most children can already discipline values regarding compliance, obedience and order have been implemented in PAUD and has developed very well
3.	Exemplary values	Most children can already exemplary values implemented by being polite to anyone, anywhere and anytime and has developed very well

Values such as integrity, courtesy, and religiosity long regarded as integral to Indonesian culture are increasingly perceived as unfamiliar and are seldom reflected in contemporary society. Currently, Indonesia is facing a noticeable decline in character, particularly evident within the education sector. Various issues have emerged, including truancy, the widespread practice of cheating, and incidents of student violence. These conditions are largely attributed to the insufficient cultivation of character from an early age, which ideally should begin within the family, and be reinforced through school and community environments (Zulaikah, 2019).

Honesty is a character formed from trustworthiness. Directorate General of Non-Formal and Informal Early Childhood Education explain that The formation of an honest character is very necessary since early early childhood. Reveals that trust is being honest and reliable in carrying out commitments, duties and obligations. Honesty can develop living conditions in a better direction, without honesty it will have an impact on the setback of all efforts made (Hidayah, A. R., dkk. 2017).

Table 2. Research Instrument of Honest Character

No.	Observation Aspect	Observation Result
1.	Children understand which are private and which are shared	Most children can already differentiate which are private and which are shared and has developed very well
2.	Children care for and guard shared property	Most children can already care for and guard shared property and has developed very well
3.	Children are used to telling the truth	Most children can already used to telling the truth to somebody and has developed very well
4.	Children are used to returning things that are not theirs	Most children already understand the difference between personal and other people's property and has developed very well
5.	Respecting shared property	Most children already respecting shared property and has developed very well
6.	Willing to admit mistakes	When they make a mistake, children are willing to admit their mistake and has developed very well
7.	Apologizing when wrong, and forgiving	Most children can already forgive

No.	Observation Aspect	Observation Result
	friends who make mistakes	each other and has developed very well
8.	Appreciating other people's excellence	Most children can already Appreciating other people's excellence and has developed very well
9.	Not accumulating toys or food for self	Most children can already to selfless and has developed very well

To emphasize the existence of honesty, characterizes people who have honest characters, namely; 1) if determined to do something, the determination is truth and goodness; 2) if he says he is not lying, 3) if there is a similarity between what his heart says and what he does (Novriyansah, A. 2017). Therefore, character education is not an easy matter but requires time, effort and hard work from the educators. Therefore it is very clear that in character education it is necessary to work hard and cooperate with all parties, both teachers as educators, as well as students and parents to participate in creating effective character education in order to be able to produce quality education and be supported by quality learning. superior and better (Jailani, A. & Rochman, C., 2019).

### Tazkiyatun Nafs

That being a teacher is a calling of the soul (nafs) as a noble task from God who creates life. The responsibilities carried out in the teaching profession in Islamic education are closely related to transcendent sacred values. The word tazkiyah comes from the Arabic language, namely mashdar from the word zakka which means cleansing and purification as well as coaching and the soul leads to a high spiritual life (Zulaikah, S., 2019).. According to Said Hawwa, etymologically tazkiyah has two main meanings namely purification and growth/development. Tazkiyah in the first sense means cleansing the soul from disgraceful traits, while tazkiyah in the second sense means growing and improving the soul with praiseworthy qualities.

Tazkiyah means purification, according to the Sufis is inner purification to get as close as possible to God through various processes that must be lived. Worship that is done perfectly and with sincerity, besides being able to increase one's piety can also build oneself from the restraints of lust, so that the purity of the soul can be achieved. Tazkiyah is defined as (1) the teachings of the Apostles to humans, which if obeyed will cause their souls to be purified by it, (2) to purify themselves from dirty souls, (3) to purify themselves from shirk, because in the Qur'an it is seen that shirk is an unclean act, (4) elevates human dignity and elevates the dignity of the hypocrites to the dignity of the mukhlisin (Mutholingah, 2021).

Whereas related to the soul in Arabic is termed nafs which linguistically can be translated into soul or self. Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi, al-Kindi, Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali they agreed to interpret the nafs as "the initial perfection for the physical which is natural, mechanistic and has an energetic life". Imam Al-Qusyairi gives the view that the soul is a being that is separate from oneself or one's own being. The soul is a subtle component that God has placed in the human body. The soul is the place of morality (Wildan, 2017).

Al-nafs refers to the process of spiritual purification aimed at restoring the soul to its original nature and healing inner spiritual disorders through Sufi-based therapeutic approaches. In this context, tazkiyah al-nafs denotes the effort to cleanse the self from negative inclinations such as nafs marah and nafs lawwamah and to transform them into a purified and tranquil state (nafs mutma'innah) by adhering to and practicing the principles of Islamic law (Mutholingah, 2021).

The component of tazkiyatun nafs in humans is a soul which consists of reason, heart, spirit and lust. Tazkiyatun nafs is defined as being able to manage the four components of the soul earlier, which are explained in detail as follows. (1). Intellect, it is the difference between humans and animals; (2) Lust, it is an urge from oneself to do something or it can be called a desire. Associated with this desire can be both good and bad things; (3) Heart, it is often called the heart. Etymologically qalbu comes from Arabic, which is rooted in the verb qa-la-ba which means to turn over. According to the terminology, heart means something that goes back and forth. The heart is a place that has been given by Allah SWT. to humans. This heart is where the intention resides. The next intention is processed by the mind so that it can be properly realized by the body in the form of deeds; (4) Spirit, it is defined as a soul that has two perspectives in terms of its source, namely that which is contained in the soul and one that is rabbinic in nature but whose essence is unknown and only Allah knows (Musbah, M. M., dkk., 2020) .

## DISCUSSION

The realization of religious and honest character criteria can be seen when religious values and honesty are embedded in students, so that they have faith and devotion to Allah SWT. as well as an honest personality in interacting with others. Based on these provisions, the implementation of learning in early childhood education can be said to be running effectively. Strengthening the religious and honest character of students through tazkiyatun nafs guidance at early childhood education is always carried out every day in the school environment as much as possible.

Everyone who is Muslim certainly wants to be close to his God, namely Allah SWT. There are so many ways to get close to Allah SWT, one of which is the path of Sufism. J. Spencer Trimingham author of *The Sufi Orders in Islam* argues that it is possible for everyone to have direct experience with God if he is willing to put himself to practice the teachings of Sufism such as the tazkiyatun nafs approach. This means that anyone can have experience with God, without exception, such as in praying. In a journal written by Arif Zamhari said that the Sufi tradition has grown significantly in the modern Muslim world, including Indonesia. Today, Sufism is not only practiced by villagers, farmers, and uneducated people, but also by urbanites, national elites, and educated people, including in early childhood schools.

Tazkiyatun nafs or purification of the soul includes all efforts taught and guided by the teacher as a person who hopes for an encounter with his Lord. The teacher guides his students to cleanse their souls from spiritual taints and various heart ailments before educating and teaching his students further. So in Islamic education, tazkiyatun nafs is prioritized in providing examples and real examples to students. That is, tazkiyatun nafs in the sense of purification of the soul is related to educational norms (code of ethics), cultivation of adab (ta'dib) and self-improvement and self-decoration (tahalli) with noble character to students. In this regard, strengthening the religious character of the PAUD Nurul Furqon Demak, namely the habit of saying greetings and shaking hands, practicing to be close to Allah through prayer, both obligatory and sunnah.

This is relevant to Muntholingah's thoughts (2021) that tazkiyah is defined as (1) the teachings of the Apostles to humans, which if obeyed will cause their souls to be purified by them, (2) purify themselves from dirty souls, (3) purify themselves from shirk, because in the Qur'an it is seen that shirk is an unclean act, (4) elevates human dignity and elevates the dignity of the hypocrites to the dignity of the mukhlisin.

The implementation of learning activities at PAUD Nurul Furqon reflects the essence of religious character by demonstrating belief in God through the consistent practice of religious values. It also includes respect for religious differences, tolerance in interfaith practices, and the maintenance of harmony within a diverse society. With regard to honesty,

children are guided to become individuals who can be relied upon, as shown through their words, actions, and responsibilities, by recognizing, articulating, and practicing what is right.



Figure 1. Tazkiyatun Nafs Guidance

Children get used to being honest in using friends' belongings in their class, they are expected to be able to take care of their friends' belongings. Besides that, they are trained to immediately return items that do not belong to them, from here the character of honesty will be implemented in children at the PAUD Nurul Furqon. The most basic honest character for children is the awakening of a commitment within them, not daring to lie to their fellow friends because they receive a special message from their parents.

Jauharotun Nafisah (The Principal of Nurul Furqon Early Childhood Education School, 34 years), said that the relationship between early childhood education in his institution is as follows:

“The children were first asked to imitate the teacher together in reading fragments of Arabic writing in the yanbu'a book, such as reading the alphabet (A, B, C), through saying ABaTa, SaJaHa, HaWaZa, and so on, then memorizing the letters a short letter in juz Amma in the Koran, then recite the daily prayers, such as: prayer to start studying and finish studying, prayer to go to sleep, prayer to wake up, prayer want to eat, pray after eating, when meeting the teacher say hello and shake hands”.

Still related to the strengthening of religious and honest character, as the results of an interview with Mustabsiroh (teacher, 38 years) that early childhood education in his institution is as follows:

“The early childhood students here for 1 hour at the beginning of murottalan learning through the reading texts contained in the qiroati book repeatedly, then getting used to the practice of praying alternately in groups, continuing reading the readings after finishing praying and praying, then daily prayer material , such as: prayer at the beginning and end of class, prayer before going to bed and waking up, prayer for eating and after eating, prayer for entering and leaving the house. Besides that, there is also a habit of memorizing short surahs in the Qur'an according to each volume class”.

It is understandable that the children at the early childhood education have developed one of the five spiritual values in everyday life, including religious character, namely believing

in God Almighty, being kind, in this case always prioritizing honesty in following the teacher's directions and guidance. Children can memorize short verses and pray before studying (Muhhana & Zulfahmi, M. N., 2025). In addition, the teacher seeks to instill religious habits such as: 1) religious beliefs, namely the implementation of belief in the divine doctrine for children in the early childhood education environment; 2) the element of worship, namely the way of worshiping God with all its components; 3) elements of religious knowledge, namely knowledge of religious teachings; and 4) elements of religious experience, namely the feelings experienced by religious people, such as joy, happiness, gratitude, obedience and so on. This religious experience is contained deep enough in each of the children.



Figure 2. Strengthening the Religious and Honest Character

Religious as one of the characters developed in early childhood education as a character value related to God Almighty, includes one's thoughts, words and actions which are strived to always be based on divine values and/or religious teachings. This religious character is very much needed by students in dealing with changing times and moral degradation, in this case students are expected to be able to have and behave with good and bad standards based on the provisions and decrees of the religion they adhere to. Then , children are also accustomed to the practice of commendable habituation, because early childhood basically tends to have the trait of imitating what the people around them do, including what they do. Children are imitators, therefore teachers should be the best figures in the eyes of their students.

## CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of education is to shape the behavior of students to have character or morals that do not conflict with religious teachings and are honest, because both of them are the basic capital in living together and the key to future success. The results of this study include:

1. Religious character represents one of the key aspects nurtured in early childhood education. This character is rooted in Islamic teachings that aim to strengthen one's relationship with God Almighty, encompassing students' thoughts, speech, and actions that are consistently guided by divine values and religious principles. Through tazkiyatun nafs practices such as training children to perform prayers, recite supplications, offer greetings, and read basmalah and hamdalah both religious and honesty values are gradually internalized. These practices embed spiritual awareness while simultaneously fostering honesty within the learners.

2. Honesty is a fundamental objective of formal education, as it serves as essential capital in life. By developing honesty, students are able to learn, comprehend, and maintain balance and harmony in their lives. This character can be effectively cultivated through continuous habituation under the guidance of teachers.

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