



## **INCULCATING HINDU-BASED RELIGIOUS AND MORAL VALUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD (A CASE STUDY OF PRATAMA WIDYALAYA DHARMA KUMARA)**

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### ***Abstract***

*The development of religious and moral values in children is an important aspect in Early Childhood Education. Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara, as the only Widyalyaya in Mataram City, strives to organize education by emphasizing the cultivation of Hindu values. This study aims to comprehensively analyze how religious and moral values are internalized from an early age and how they contribute to the formation of children's character. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies, then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The results of the study show that the cultivation of religious and moral values in Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara is carried out through various activities, namely Tri Sandhya together, prayer before meals, learning activities, and going home, Purnama-Tilem worship together, and prayer at the temple (outing class). These activities shape children's character through habituation and direct experience. Some of the challenges faced include diverse family backgrounds, high demands on teacher creativity, and suboptimal synergy between schools and parents. The development of religious and moral values in children is evident in behavioral changes, such as the habit of saying "Om Swastyastu", responding to instructions, paying closer attention to the teacher's directions, praying before activities, speaking more politely, and showing concern for the surrounding environment. This research emphasizes the importance of internalizing religious and moral values in Early Childhood Education and the need to strengthen their implementation in other Early Childhood Education institutions. However, because the study was limited to a single location and a small number of subjects, follow-up research with a broader scope is urgently needed to yield more comprehensive results.*

**Keywords:** religious values, moral values, Hinduism, Pratama Widyalyaya

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood education is the first stage of formal education experienced by a child and serves as the main foundation for the formation of character, moral values, and religious attitudes that will develop at the next level. Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age because, in this phase, the cognitive, affective, and spiritual potential of children develops rapidly. The learning experiences provided during this period have a significant effect on the formation of personality and spirituality (Putra, 2022). Early childhood education should not be oriented only toward the development of intellectual and motor aspects, but also the affective and religious dimensions. These dimensions allow children to become familiar with the concept of divinity in a simple way through play, storytelling, and the habituation of

noble values (Bhatia & Vyas, 2023). In the context of Hindu religious education, this process serves as a vehicle for internalizing the values of *Tri Kaya Parisudha*, *Tat Twam Asi*, and *Catur Paramita*, which form the basis of morality, empathy, and spiritual awareness (Wiguna & Widyasari, 2025). In early childhood education, children are introduced to religious and moral values, as well as physical-motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and artistic aspects.

The introduction of all aspects of development to children at the early childhood education level should be carried out thoroughly and contextually, as exposing children to physical, social, and spiritual environments serves as the primary means for them to internalize values, build curiosity, and form social-religious attitudes from an early age (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). Environment-based approaches and hands-on activities such as exploration, structured play, and the habituation of simple rituals have proven effective in fostering children's affective responses and spiritual intelligence, especially when educational practices are combined with cultural values such as *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes the harmony between humans, nature, and God (Pramerta, 2023; Riyanti et al., 2024).

Early Childhood Education with Hindu religious distinctions is known as Pratama Widyalyaya (PW). Pratama Widyalyaya is a Hindu religious education unit under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, holding a status equivalent to formal Early Childhood Education, as established by the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 2 of 2024 concerning Widyalyaya. PW serves as an educational institution that instills religious values from an early age. The only PW in Mataram City is Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara Mataram. Like other PWs, it plays an important role in shaping children's spiritual foundations through environmentally based approaches and Hindu religious culture. Through activities such as collective prayer, dharma storytelling, sacred chanting, and symbolic play based on Hindu teachings, the school fosters children's spiritual awareness in a contextual and enjoyable way. This educational model aligns with findings that integrating religious values and local culture can strengthen the spiritual and social character of early childhood (Jayendra, 2024; Pramerta, 2023). PW is not only a place for learning but also a space for the formation of religious character and the appreciation of *Tri Hita Karana* values from an early age.

In the 2024/2025 school year, PW Dharma Kumara Mataram accepted eight students as its first batch. As a new school oriented toward Hindu religious education, the institution demonstrates a strong commitment to instilling a foundation of religious and moral values from an early age. Learning is designed so that children experience the process of internalizing Hindu sacred values through enjoyable and meaningful activities, such as symbolic play, dharma storytelling, and the simple practice of *praying together*. This effort aligns with the view that early childhood education should be a stage for forming a *moral foundation* that integrates the spiritual and social aspects of children (Margaretha & Haryono, 2024; Wiguna & Widyasari, 2025). PW Dharma Kumara not only introduces religious teachings but also cultivates character, empathy, and ethical awareness, which are the basis for the development of religious personality.

Previous research has found that the cultivation of religious and moral values in children is adapted to their developmental stages, characteristics, and abilities (Salasiah, 2021). Activities aimed at instilling religious and moral values are also carried out through habituation, which arises not only from religious behavior but also from students' social activities (Nurma & Purnama, 2022). Such value-instilling activities are important in early childhood, as they lay the foundation for the development of good character in the future (Karima et al., 2022). The three previous studies focused more on Islamic values, which certainly share similarities with the values of Hinduism to be outlined in the current research. In addition, school-based religious education tends to be more effective in instilling religious and moral values. Activities in Christian schools also have a positive impact on forming students' Christian character (Kayang et al., 2025). The habituation of Dhuha prayer activities for students at Madrasah Ibtidayah has also been proven to improve students' religious character and discipline (Danuwara & Giyoto, 2024). Similarly, the right strategies such as student-centered learning, play, storytelling, singing, and integrated learning can enhance children's religious and moral values (Maharani & Kholifah, 2024). Based on several previous studies, there are issues that have not yet been explored, namely the instillation of

religious and moral values in Hindu-based early childhood education at Widyalyaya Primary School.

Theoretically, this research is based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which states that early childhood is at the pre-operational stage (2–7 years), where children understand the world through symbols, imitation, and play (Ibda, 2015; Piaget & Inhelder, 2016). This explains why the teaching of religious values at an early age should be realized in concrete forms, such as role-playing or telling stories about God, to match children's symbolic way of thinking. Meanwhile, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development explains that children are at the pre-conventional stage, where good and bad behavior are determined by direct consequences such as praise and punishment (Ibda, 2023). Therefore, the habit of good behavior, such as respecting teachers, praying before meals, and maintaining the cleanliness of the Padmasana at school, is an effective means of moral formation. Furthermore, James Fowler's theory of faith development places early childhood in the intuitive-projective stage, which is the phase when children begin to grasp religious symbols through imagination, stories, and emotional experiences (Rustam et al., 2021).

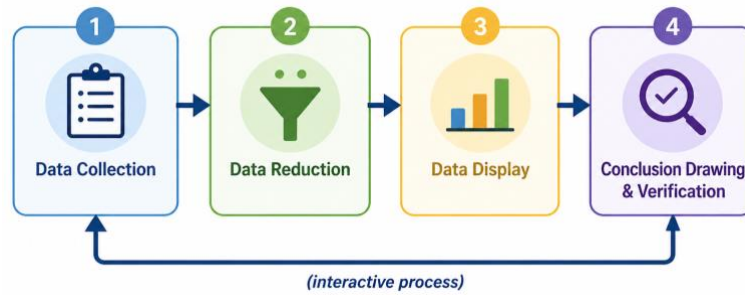
The results of observations conducted in May 2025 show that activities aimed at instilling religious and moral values at Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara have been systematically integrated into children's daily routines. These activities include the practice of *Tri Sandya* before entering class, praying before meals, praying before going home, and collective *Purnama-Tilem* worship in the school environment. These practices reflect the learning-by-doing approach in Hindu religious education, where spiritual values are not only taught verbally but are also internalized through habituation and experiential learning. The learning pattern at PW Dharma Kumara demonstrates harmonization among cognitive, moral, and spiritual aspects in accordance with the stages of early childhood development.

Based on the descriptions above, there is an urgent need for more in-depth research on the implementation of religious and moral value education in Hindu-based early childhood education institutions. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the activities involved in instilling religious and moral values at PW Dharma Kumara Mataram, a newly established Hindu religious education institution. The research focuses on the types of religious activities implemented, the challenges faced by teachers, and the development of children's attitudes resulting from these activities. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of how religious and moral values are internalized from an early age and how they contribute to the formation of children's character.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon of instilling religious and moral values in early childhood at Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara. This approach was chosen to gain a holistic understanding of the practice of Hindu religious education within the school's social and cultural context. The research was conducted over one month, from May to June 2025, with one school principal, two teachers, and one parent as the main sources of information. Data were collected using three primary techniques: participatory observation to record children's behavior and activities during religious events; in-depth interviews to explore teachers' perspectives on habituation strategies and internalized values; and documentation in the form of activity notes, daily schedules, and relevant learning photos. The interview topics for teachers and the principal were tailored to their school-based roles: (1) strategies for habituating religious practices in daily learning activities, (2) methods of integrating Hindu moral values into classroom routines, (3) types of religious and moral activities implemented at school, (4) challenges faced in guiding children with diverse backgrounds, and (5) observed changes in children's behavior and character development. In contrast, the interview topics for parents focused on: (1) reinforcement of religious and moral values at home, (2) children's behavioral changes after attending school, (3) parental involvement in supporting school programs, (4) communication and collaboration with teachers, and (5) challenges experienced in guiding children's religious practices at home. Although both interview guides addressed the internalization of values, the questions were designed differently to reflect the distinct roles and perspectives of teachers and parents.

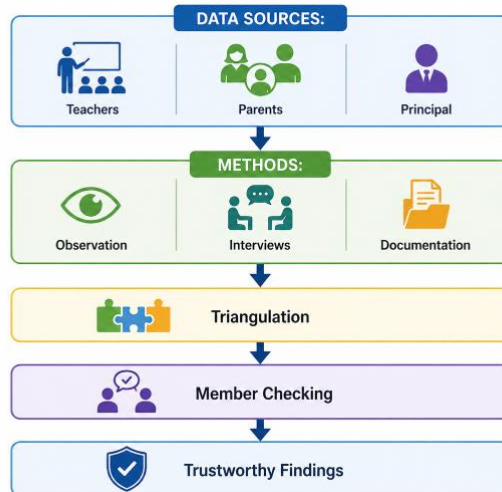
Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). This process was conducted interactively and continuously throughout the data collection period. The stages of data analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Data Analysis Process

(Source: Generated by ChatGPT, 2026)

To ensure the data's trustworthiness, this study applied triangulation of sources and methods by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted with participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. The validation process is presented in Figure 2 to illustrate how credibility was maintained (Creswel, 2016; Sugiyono, 2023).



**Figure 2.** Data Validation Process

(Source: Generated by ChatGPT, 2026)

Through this design, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Hindu religious and moral values are pedagogically internalized in early childhood through habituation, symbolic, and ritual approaches aligned with children's cognitive, moral, and spiritual developmental stages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Activities for Instilling Religious and Moral Values in Children

Religious values in early childhood play a fundamental role in the formation of character and personality, which has become increasingly crucial over the past 10 years amid the onslaught of the digital era. The first years of life are a critical period for instilling moral values and empathy in children. Religious values taught through examples, stories, and simple rituals provide a clear framework of good and evil and help build a solid spiritual foundation (Khofifah & Mufarochah, 2022). Children who are introduced to religious values through a fun and contextual approach tend to have a better ability to regulate emotions and respect others. Therefore, the internalization of religious values from an early age is not just about ritual knowledge, but represents a key investment in forming a morally and spiritually sound human being for the future.

Meanwhile, moral values are the practical and behavioral manifestations of instilled religious values, serving as operational guides for young children to behave and interact in daily life. If religious values form the spiritual foundation and beliefs about good and evil, then moral values are the "language of deeds" that embody them. For example, religious values about God's compassion translate into moral actions such as sharing toys, telling the truth, or

respecting friends. The cultivation of these two sets of values must go hand in hand; a contextual understanding of religion will naturally internalize moral values such as empathy and justice. In early childhood, moral values bridge the gap between abstract beliefs and tangible actions, forming positive character and helping children build harmonious relationships within their social environment.

Religious and moral values are important for children during their golden age (Nurhayati et al., 2024). Habituation related to religious and moral values should begin early, allowing children to internalize the values that shape behavior in accordance with the ethical systems, social norms, and moral principles found in society. Through consistent routines, children learn to recognize appropriate behavior, understand the consequences of their actions, and begin to develop self-awareness and social responsibility. This process involves not only verbal instruction, but also hands-on experiences through daily activities such as prayer, symbolic games, interacting with friends, and participating in religious rituals (Putranto, 2025; Sari et al., 2024). Early habituation is a vital foundation for the development of children's character, discipline, and moral awareness, helping positive behavior become a naturally embedded part of their lives. This is in line with a statement from one of the teachers at PW Dharma Kumara, as follows.

"We make the cultivation of religious values a key advantage of Pratama Widyalyaya. Since its inception, we have agreed that children here are not only introduced to reading, writing, and arithmetic, but are also accustomed to living according to the teachings of dharma. Every day before studying, they perform *Tri Sandhya* together, learn to say simple prayers, and understand the meaning of prayer in an enjoyable way. We want them, from an early age, to develop religious habits, behave politely, respect teachers, and show love for their friends. So, it is not just the cognitive aspect that we are focusing on, but also character and moral formation in accordance with Hindu religious values."

The excerpt from the teacher's interview above shows that PW Dharma Kumara seeks to demonstrate the characteristics of Hinduism through its educational approach for children. This aligns with observations made by researchers on May 23, 2025 with the results as presented in table 1 below.

**Tabel 1.** Observation Evidence of Religious Habituation Practices

Aspect	Description
Observed Behavior	Newly arrived children were habituated to greet with " <i>Om Swastyastu</i> " and show respect to teachers through <i>salim</i> (hand greeting).
Pre-Learning Activity	Before the learning session began, students were guided to perform <i>Tri Sandhya together</i> in front of the Padmasana.
Interpretation	These practices indicate the early habituation of religious manners and structured spiritual routines as part of daily school activities.

Other activities carried out by PW to internalize children's religious and moral values include prayers before meals, study prayers, prayers before going home, *full-tilem* worship, and worship at the temple (*Outing Class*). This aligns with the principal's statement regarding several activities conducted by PW to foster children's religious and moral values, as follows.

"We have programs that are both routine and occasional. Our routine programs include *Tri Sandhya* before entering class, prayer before eating, prayer before going home, and communal worship during *Purnama and Tilem*. These activities are an important part of children's daily lives, allowing religious and moral values to be gradually embedded. In addition, we also prepare occasional programs tailored to specific moments, such as religious holiday celebrations or Hindu cultural activities. We hope that through this habituation, children can internalize *dharma values* from an early age and build a strong moral foundation."

The principal's statement is supported by the results of an interview with one of the students' parents, as follows.

"I see that the activities for cultivating *sradha* and *bhakti* in children are quite good, and I do not see this in other schools. Children are taught to pray, follow *Tri Sandhya*,

and perform regular worship in a fun way so they do not feel burdened. I find these programs very beneficial because my children can learn to understand Hindu values from an early age while becoming accustomed to polite and respectful behavior toward teachers and friends."

The alignment between the views of teachers and parents demonstrates good synergy in developing students' abilities in accordance with school policies. This synergy results from meetings between the school and parents to discuss the school's programs and core values. Figure 3 presents documentation of a meeting between parents and the school.



**Figure 3.** School and Parent Coordination Meeting  
(Source: PW Dharma Kumara, 2025)

Based on the results of interviews and observations, several activities in internalizing religious and moral values in PW Dharma Kumara students can be described as follows.

### **1. *Tri Sandya* Together**

A teacher stated that children are consistently guided to perform *Tri Sandya* together in an enjoyable and meaningful way, allowing them not only to memorize prayers but also to develop a sense of reverence and respect. This finding is supported by observational data showing that children gather in front of the Padmasana and perform the ritual collectively under teacher guidance. The practice of *Tri Sandhya* together can be seen in Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4.** Students, teachers, and the principal perform *Tri Sandhya*  
(Source: PW Dharma Kumara, 2025)

### **2. Praying Before Meals, Learning Activities, and Going Home**

Another important activity is the habituation of praying before meals, before learning activities, and before going home. This routine is implemented consistently as part of children's daily experiences at school. These activities are designed to gradually instill awareness of gratitude, discipline, and respect for religious practices. Observations indicate that children are guided to recite simple prayers together, and over time, many begin to perform these practices independently.

### **3. *Purnama–Tilam* Worship Together**

In addition to daily routines, Pratama Widyalyaya Dharma Kumara conducts periodic religious activities such as Praying *Purnama–Tilam* Together. This activity represents a more structured and ceremonial form of religious practice. This program is part of both routine and incidental activities aimed at strengthening children's spiritual experiences. During these events,

children participate in collective worship in a guided and engaging manner, allowing them to experience religious rituals in a meaningful context.

#### **4. Outing Class: Temple Worship Activities**

Another activity identified in the findings is *Outing Class*, where children are taken to temples to participate in worship activities outside the school environment. This activity provides direct experiential learning and strengthens children's connection to religious practices in real-life settings.

According to Kohlberg, early childhood is at the pre-conventional stage, where moral understanding is closely tied to direct consequences (punishment or praise) and orientation to rules set by authority figures (Ibda, 2023). Character education for young children remains focused on this stage and requires teaching strategies suited to it (Sunaryo & Fauziati, 2023). At PW Dharma Kumara, the habituation of rituals and routine prayers serves as an external mechanism (such as praise or teacher/parental recognition) that supports children's morals at the pre-conventional level. Children are guided to participate in activities through encouragement and direction from teachers or the school principal. However, since early childhood has not yet reached the conventional or post-conventional stages, a consistent habituation approach and strong role models are essential.

On the other hand, Fowler posits that the development of human faith occurs through several stages. For young children, this corresponds to the intuitive-projective stage of faith, in which the child absorbs religious symbols, narratives, and rituals in an imaginative and emotional way (Rustam et al., 2021). Teaching religious ritual symbols from early childhood can help internalize faith (Naily, 2023). Activities in schools such as *Tri Sandhya*, joint prayer, and *Purnama-Tilem* rituals provide ritual symbols and spiritual narratives that match the intuitive-projective stage. Here, children learn through real-life experiences, imitation, and stories, so that religious faith and attitudes begin to form naturally.

Meanwhile, according to Piaget, preoperational children (ages 2–7) begin to use symbols and imagination to understand the world, although their concrete logic is still limited. The ability to think symbolically is highly relevant to learning processes involving religious symbols. Children at this age can recognize and assign meaning to symbols but still require guidance and a concrete context (Hafidza et al., 2024). In the context of this study, Hindu rituals, prayers, and symbols provide a tangible medium for children to understand religious values in alignment with the preoperational stage. Children can imitate religious customs, use symbols (such as *Amustikarana* hand gestures during *Tri Sandhya*), and, through habituation, internalize these values since abstract logic skills are not yet fully developed.

#### **The Challenge of Instilling Religious and Moral Values in Children**

Educating children at an early age is much more difficult than teaching children at the secondary or university level (Hully, 2021; Nabila et al., 2023). Emotionally and socially, young children are still very difficult to control. They do not understand instructions well because they are in the play phase, so it is only easy when they are invited to play. Pratama Widyalyaya also experiences these obstacles in the learning process. Therefore, becoming a teacher at PW requires not only educational qualifications but also qualities such as good self-management, the ability to integrate with the world of children, careful planning and preparation, extraordinary patience, natural nurturing ability, a strong desire to learn, and creativity in teaching (Raihana et al., 2023).

Regarding the cultivation of religious and moral values in PW Dharma Kumara, teachers also face various obstacles and challenges. Working in a new school with unique characteristics means teachers are still searching for the right educational rhythm while implementing planned programs. Observations show that teachers often sigh and exercise patience when dealing with the complexity of children's personalities during learning activities. For example, when invited to pray, some students still carry toys, some run away with their friends' shoes, and teachers need to intervene. In line with this, one of the teachers stated the following.

"Because these children come from various family backgrounds, some are easy to direct, while others are very difficult. Some children are so accustomed to religious routines at home that they quickly follow *Tri Sandhya*, pre-meal prayers, and

*Purnama-Tilem* worship. However, there are also children who are not yet familiar with spiritual activities, so they require a more patient and creative approach. These differences require us to adapt our teaching methods and build a fun learning atmosphere so that all children can participate in learning activities."

In line with the above statement, other teachers also said that students' family backgrounds greatly affect their activities at school.

"Some children easily remember prayers, while others do not. Some even continue to play when invited to pray or worship. This is natural, considering that children's character and concentration levels vary. For this reason, we try to use a variety of approaches, such as guiding children through songs, movements, or inspirational stories, so they can more easily understand and remember prayers and rituals. This flexible approach allows every child to participate in school activities while fostering a sense of comfort and enjoyment in the process of instilling religious attitudes at school."

Teachers' creativity in teaching is essential to providing comfort to children. Directing, setting an example, motivating, and encouraging children to participate in learning activities is common practice for PW teachers. In Figure 5 below, the teacher is shown working to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to follow directions.



**Figure 5.** PW teacher is conditioning the classroom atmosphere  
(Source: PW Dharma Kumara, 2025)

The effectiveness of all student activities at school depends on reinforcement from parents at home. Parents should not leave their child's learning progress entirely to the school. At home, parents must act as early childhood teachers, repeat the material children have learned, and reinforce the good habits they have developed at school (Apriati, 2021; Mutafarrida & Kholisa, 2023). This aligns with the statement from the head of PW Dharma Kumara below.

"Through the WA group, we communicate all activities to parents and invite them to collaborate with the school. We encourage what is taught at school to also be reinforced at home, so children experience consistency in learning. Indeed, some parents do not even know the prayers, which is a challenge in supporting children at home. To address this, we plan to create a prayer book for parents, making it easier for them to guide their children effectively."

Regarding some of the challenges teachers face when encouraging children to participate in school activities, one parent said the following:

"I sometimes feel sorry for the teacher, who is exhausted by the children. When invited to pray, children must first be coaxed into participating. At home, however, we still try to reinforce what is taught at school, such as guiding them in prayer and explaining the meaning of rituals in simple terms. Although it is not always easy, we do see progress in the children, especially in terms of religious awareness and polite behavior."

The parents' statement above implies that teachers face numerous challenges. Educating children and making them feel comfortable are not easy tasks. Children often prefer play-related activities, and when invited to participate in routines involving cognitive development, language, or religious values, a "lazy side" often emerges. The inculcation of religious and moral values in early childhood at PW Dharma Kumara faces several obstacles,

consistent with research findings in early childhood education: diverse family backgrounds, challenges in teacher readiness, and optimal school-home synergy (teacher-parents).

### **1. Diverse family backgrounds**

Diverse family backgrounds are a major factor. Some children are not accustomed to religious routines or moral habits at home. Research shows that differences in household experiences related to moral or religious values are a significant challenge to the internalization of values in schools (Salsabilah et al., 2024).

### **2. Challenges in teacher readiness**

Teacher readiness and the need for highly creative instruction are also challenges. Pedagogical strategies appropriate to a child's developmental stage require teachers to be consistently creative, even in the face of *burnout*. A lack of strategies suited to children's character and developmental stage can hinder the formation of prosocial and moral behaviors (Arifiyanti et al., 2025).

### **3. Not optimal school-parents synergy**

The synergy between schools and parents is not always optimal, and parental involvement remains uneven an important obstacle in early childhood religious and moral value education (Tihama et al., 2025). Fourth, the implementation of religious and moral values at Pratama Widyalyaya does not yet have a dedicated plan, so teachers are still searching for the right methods based on the characteristics of the school and its students (Arifiyanti, 2024).

The challenges experienced in efforts to instill religious and moral values in children at PW Dharma Kumara indicate the need for cooperation between school principals, teachers, parents, and students. Most problems arise from this factor. While basic teaching skills are important, they are not the primary issue that triggers other problems.

## **Development of Children's Religious and Moral Values**

It is highly appropriate to instill religious values in children during their golden age, as these serve as the foundation for moral values. The habituation practiced at PW has gradually impacted the development of children's religious and moral values. Research observations indicate that children who were initially unaccustomed to saying greetings have slowly adopted the "Om Swastyastu" greeting. When a new child enters the room, most are already able to say the greeting without being prompted. Additionally, almost all children who previously did not memorize *Tri Sandhya* have gradually learned certain verses, though not all. The verse most commonly memorized is the First Verse of *Tri Sandhya* (*Mantam Gayatri*). In line with this, one of the teachers said the following.

"Educating these children truly requires patience. Initially, we thought it would be difficult for them to change, but over time, as they were given consistent routines and examples by the teachers, they began to participate in school activities. Some even started to pray on their own, say prayers, and practice salim, eventually becoming accustomed to saying 'please,' 'sorry,' and 'thank you.'"

The gradual change in students' attitudes demonstrates the success of internalizing moral and religious values. One parent stated the following:

"I am very happy with my daughter's progress. Since attending Pratama Widyalyaya, he has learned *Tri Sandhya*, prays before every meal, regularly says greetings, and can now say 'please,' 'sorry,' and 'thank you.'"

The descriptions from teachers and parents above indicate that there have been positive changes in students after participating in various school activities. In Figure 6 below, it can be seen that children are willing to eat together in an orderly manner and have become accustomed to praying before meals.



**Figure 6.** Children Eat Together in an orderly manner  
(Source: PW Dharma Kumara, 2025)

Some of the changes in religious and moral values observed in children after habituation at PW include: becoming accustomed to saying "*Om Swastyastu*" greetings, responding when asked, listening more attentively to the teacher's directions, getting used to praying before activities, speaking more softly, and developing a sense of concern for their surroundings.

### **1. Children are used to saying "*Om Swastyastu*" greetings**

The habit of children saying the greeting "*Om Swastyastu*" demonstrates the internalization of religious manners that have been embedded through habituation. According to Piaget, early childhood is at the pre-operational stage, where their understanding of values and symbols is still intuitive and concrete. Religious greetings serve as concrete symbols that are easy for children to remember and imitate through repetition and modeling. Piaget emphasized that the repetition of meaningful actions is foundational for forming moral and spiritual schemas in a child's mind (Arifiyanti et al., 2025). From Kohlberg's perspective, this behavior reflects the pre-conventional stage, when good actions are performed to gain acceptance or praise from authority figures such as teachers and parents (Ibda, 2023). However, when greetings are offered without prompting, it indicates that the child is beginning to move toward the initial conventional moral stage, where norms are accepted as good social habits. Spiritually, according to Fowler (1981), early childhood is at the intuitive-projective stage of faith, where symbolic experiences such as greetings, prayers, and mantras nurture the seeds of respect and trust in God (Saingo & Suardana, 2023). The repeated recitation of the greeting strengthens the emotional bond between religious acts and the experience of spiritual togetherness. Repeatedly encountering positive religious symbols in a social context deepens a child's understanding of *sraddha*.

### **2. Children respond when asked**

The behavior of children who begin to respond when asked by the teacher indicates progress in social and moral awareness. In Kohlberg's framework, this response is characteristic of the transition from the pre-conventional to the conventional stage, where children begin to understand the importance of respecting authority and social norms, such as answering questions politely (Sunaryo & Fauziati, 2023). The teacher's habit of consistently calling children's names and giving positive feedback strengthens moral learning through social reinforcement. From Piaget's perspective, the ability to respond shows the development of symbolic functions and language as tools for social thinking. Children do not simply imitate, but begin to understand the meaning of interaction as part of a developing social thinking structure (Grashinta et al., 2025). In the dimension of faith, according to Fowler, the behavior of answering teachers also contains affective elements, namely the emergence of trust and connection with spiritual authority figures (teachers). Research (Hanafi, 2022) shows that positive emotional relationships with religious figures at an early age form the basis for trust-based faith, which is faith that grows from a sense of security in social relationships.

### **3. Children listen when the teacher gives instructions**

A child's ability to listen is an important aspect of developing early self-control and morality. According to Kohlberg, listening behavior arises when children begin to understand rules as something to be obeyed, not just out of fear of punishment. Children who listen demonstrate

orientation to group norms and respect for moral authority figures (Ibda, 2023; Irawan et al., 2024). In Piaget's framework, the act of listening reflects the development of the ability to decenter that is, to consider perspectives other than one's own (Aminah & Mauliyah, 2025; Piaget, 2009). Religious story-based learning activities increase children's empathy and attention to moral instruction (Adwiah et al., 2025). The experience of listening to simple advice and instruction provides a foundation for children to recognize the importance of communication in daily activities.

#### **4. Children pray before eating and before studying**

The habit of praying signifies the growth of intuitive spiritual awareness. According to Fowler's theory, the prayers children recite at the intuitive-projective faith stage are not yet understood conceptually but are filled with emotional meanings that foster intimacy with God (Naily, 2023). Children associate prayer with feelings of security, gratitude, and calm. Teacher-guided prayer routines reinforce the connection between ritual and a sense of divine presence in the child's experience. In Piaget's framework, prayer is a symbolic activity that combines language, imagination, and emotion the three main elements in the development of preoperational thinking (Suyanti, 2022). Meanwhile, from Kohlberg's perspective, prayer routines performed without coercion indicate a shift from external obedience to internalization of religious values (Amin et al., 2024). Children no longer pray simply because they are told, but because they have become accustomed to viewing prayer as part of good moral behavior.

#### **5. Children speak softly**

Changes in the way children speak more softly indicate the emergence of moral feelings related to empathy and social awareness. Kohlberg explained that morality is not only a matter of reasoning, but also an emotional disposition toward good values. Children learn to associate soft speech with appreciation and affection, resulting from social reinforcement by both school and home environments (Arifiyanti, 2024). According to Piaget, this aligns with the developing ability to take on roles, in which children can imagine the feelings of others when they hear their words. Meanwhile, Fowler sees this as an early sign of relational faith, which is faith that grows through loving relationships with others (Hanafi, 2022). When a child realizes that speaking softly pleases a teacher or friend, the emotional experience reinforces the moral value that comes from love (*mudita*), a core teaching of *dharma* in the Hindu perspective.

#### **6. Children show a caring attitude**

Caring attitudes, such as helping a friend or showing sympathy, are signs of prosocial moral development. Kohlberg places this behavior at the conventional stage, where good actions are performed to maintain harmony and interpersonal relationships. Children who help friends demonstrate that the value of "good" has been internalized as part of their identity (Sunaryo & Fauziati, 2023). Piaget views prosocial behavior as the result of moral interaction and negotiation during play; children learn that altruistic actions bring social satisfaction (Nasution & Sit, 2024). From Fowler's perspective, caring for others is a relational manifestation of faith, in which the child feels the presence of divine values in acts of love and assistance. Collaborative activities and joint prayers strengthen the sense of spiritual brotherhood among young Hindu children. One form of belonging among children at PW Dharma Kumara is active participation in activities to clean the school environment, as shown in Figure 7 below.



**Figure 7.** Students clean the PW environment  
(Source: PW Dharma Kumara, 2025)

Referring to the changes observed in children's religious and moral values, education in Widyalya Primary should be designed not only as the transfer of teachings but as the cultivation of habits that are embodied through symbols, relationships, and examples. Teachers act as moral and spiritual mediators, instilling religious values through concrete practice and empathetic dialogue. With this approach, religious education can nurture children who are not only ritually obedient but also compassionate, ethical, and spiritually intelligent from their golden age onward.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the instillation of Hindu-based religious and moral values in early childhood at Pratama Widyalya Dharma Kumara is implemented through an integrated approach combining daily habituation, periodic rituals, and experiential learning activities, including *Tri Sandya* together, daily prayers, *Purnama–Tilem* worship, and temple-based outing classes. These activities serve as pedagogical strategies that support character development through repetition, modeling, and symbolic and experiential engagement, enabling children to internalize values reflected in behaviors such as respectful greetings, independent prayer, polite communication, obedience, and caring attitudes. These findings align with Piaget's cognitive theory, Kohlberg's moral development theory, and Fowler's faith development theory, which emphasize learning through concrete experience and social interaction. However, challenges remain, including diverse family backgrounds, the need for sustained teacher creativity, varying levels of parental involvement, and the absence of standardized guidelines. Therefore, strengthening school–parent collaboration and designing structured, contextually meaningful programs are essential to ensure consistent value internalization. This study is limited to a single institution, with a small sample and a short duration; thus, further research with a broader scope and a mixed-methods approach is recommended to deepen understanding of effective strategies in early childhood religious and moral education.

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