

# Dhuha Prayer Habituation and Self-Regulation in Early Childhood: A Qualitative Study of Indonesian Kindergarten Children Aged 5–6 Years

Laela Lutfiana Rachmah<sup>1</sup>, Alfarobi Ahmad Sulaiman<sup>2</sup>, Mutiara Fahrnunisa<sup>3</sup>, Zainul Arifin<sup>4</sup>, Azkiya Jihadi A'la<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama , Blitar, Indonesia

[laelalutfiana@gmail.com](mailto:laelalutfiana@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

[alfarobi.ahmad.2401548@students.um.ac.id](mailto:alfarobi.ahmad.2401548@students.um.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

[mutiarafahrnunisa@gmail.com](mailto:mutiarafahrnunisa@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

[zainul.arifin.2401548@students.um.ac.id](mailto:zainul.arifin.2401548@students.um.ac.id)

<sup>5</sup>Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

[azkiyajihadi14@gmail.com](mailto:azkiyajihadi14@gmail.com)

---

## **Keywords:**

*Dhuha prayer habituation;  
Early childhood self-  
regulation  
Interpretive  
phenomenology*

---

---

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines how the habituation of the dhuha prayer is experienced and interpreted in relation to observable self-regulatory behaviors in early childhood education. Adopting an interpretive phenomenological design, the research was conducted in one Islamic kindergarten where dhuha prayer forms part of the daily routine. Participants included children aged five to six years and educators directly involved in the ritual practice. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using interpretive thematic procedures with attention to variability and contextual constraints.

Findings indicate that within the structured ritual context, patterns of behavioral order, situational emotional settling, attentional engagement, and emerging initiative were observable. Verbatim interview excerpts and field notes suggest that the predictable sequencing, collective participation, and guided structure of the activity coincided with the temporary alignment of regulatory behaviors. However, variability across children was evident, and behavioral patterns were context-bound rather than uniformly sustained across settings. The study does not claim causal effects or developmental trajectories. Instead, it documents how a culturally embedded religious routine functioned as a socially organized environment in which regulatory behaviors were more visibly structured. These findings contribute to interdisciplinary discussions by situating religious ritual within developmental psychology frameworks of environmental scaffolding and guided participation. Further multi-site, longitudinal, and multi-method research is needed to examine

---

mechanisms, boundary conditions, and contextual influences more rigorously.

*This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.*



---

**Corresponding Author:**

Zainul Arifin

Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Negeri Malang, 65145, Malang, Indonesia

Email: [zainularifin.um@gmail.com](mailto:zainularifin.um@gmail.com)

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Self-regulation is widely recognized in developmental psychology as a foundational capacity underlying children's behavioral control, emotional modulation, and executive functioning processes [1], [2]. Contemporary models conceptualize self-regulation as a multidimensional construct integrating inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility within executive function frameworks [3], [4]. Temperament-based perspectives further emphasize effortful control as a central mechanism through which children manage impulses and sustain attention [5]. Strong self-regulation in early childhood is consistently associated with later academic competence, social adaptation, and mental health outcomes [6], [7]. Conversely, early regulatory difficulties are linked to long-term behavioral and learning challenges [8].

Within early childhood education, structured play, classroom routines, and mindfulness-based activities have been identified as supportive contexts for strengthening regulatory skills [9], [10]. Repetitive, rhythm-based, and meaning-oriented activities may facilitate attentional stability and emotional calmness [11]. However, empirical literature also cautions against simplified causal claims when linking culturally embedded practices, particularly religious rituals, to psychological constructs in young children, given the complexity of developmental, contextual, and interpretive factors involved [12], [13]. Such caution calls for approaches that privilege contextual meaning rather than experimental manipulation.

In parallel, religious practices in early childhood education, especially in faith-based settings, are often framed within moral and character education discourses [14], [15]. Islamic educational scholarship highlights the role of habituated worship in fostering discipline and the formation of internal values [16]. Nevertheless, these discussions predominantly address normative and moral outcomes, while self-regulation as a clearly defined psychological construct receives limited direct analytical attention [17]. Furthermore, few studies situate children's lived religious experiences within established developmental psychology frameworks, creating a conceptual gap at the intersection of psychology and religious education [18].

The present study is positioned within this interdisciplinary intersection. Drawing on ecological and socio-cultural perspectives, self-regulation is understood not merely as an internal trait but as a process shaped through participation in meaningful social practices [19], [20]. From this perspective, structured religious routines such as dhuha prayer are examined as lived experiences that may involve guided attention, bodily regulation, emotional quieting, and rule-governed sequences of action, without presupposing measurable causal effects.

Consistent with a phenomenological qualitative orientation, this study does not seek to test hypotheses or determine causal relationships. Instead, it aims to explore how the habituation of dhuha prayer is experienced and interpreted in relation to behavioral, emotional, and attentional aspects of self-regulation in early childhood settings [21].

Accordingly, the guiding research question is reformulated as: How is the habituation of dhuha prayer experienced and interpreted in relation to self-regulation among early childhood learners in Islamic kindergarten contexts?

Despite the expanding literature on early childhood self-regulation, a conceptual gap persists at the intersection of developmental psychology and faith-based educational practice [22]. Existing studies frequently treat religious habituation either as moral indoctrination or as a presumed causal mechanism for psychological development, without systematically examining how regulatory behaviors are situated within lived ritual practice [23], [24]. This leaves unresolved questions regarding how structured

religious routines function pedagogically within real classroom contexts.

The present study addresses this gap by reframing dhuha prayer habituation not as a developmental intervention, but as a socially organized, repetitive, and symbolically structured environment. Rather than assuming psychological effects, this research proposes a contextual-situated analytical approach: self-regulatory behaviors are examined as observable patterns emerging within specific ritual conditions shaped by sequencing, collective synchronization, and guided participation. This positioning allows religious practice to be analyzed within established developmental frameworks, particularly environmental scaffolding and socio-cultural regulation, without collapsing into causal claims.

By adopting interpretive phenomenology, the study offers a methodological solution to prior oversimplifications. Instead of testing whether prayer “improves” self-regulation, it explores how regulatory behaviors become visible, organized, and interpreted within a ritualized context. This conceptual reframing strengthens theoretical coherence and prevents theological presupposition from replacing empirical inquiry.

By integrating established developmental models of self-regulation with contextualized religious practices, this study contributes to a theoretically grounded and methodologically coherent dialogue between developmental psychology and early childhood religious education research [25], [26].

## **2. METHOD**

This study employed an interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenological design to explore how the habituation of dhuha prayer is experienced and understood within an early childhood educational context in relation to self-regulatory processes. Phenomenology was selected not to measure self-regulation as a variable or to test causal relationships, but to examine the meanings constructed around daily religious routines in situated pedagogical practice. Considering the developmental characteristics of children aged 5–6 years, the study did not assume that children possess a fully developed metacognitive capacity to articulate abstract concepts of self-regulation. Therefore, the phenomenological focus was placed on children’s embodied participation in prayer routines

as observed in natural settings, as well as educators' lived experiences in guiding and interpreting these practices.

The research was conducted at Pembina State Kindergarten in Tana Tidung Regency, an institution that systematically integrates dhuha prayer into its daily program. The site was selected purposively due to the consistency of prayer habituation practices and institutional support for prolonged field engagement. Data collection was carried out over three months (October–December 2025), allowing sufficient immersion to support iterative interpretation and thematic saturation.

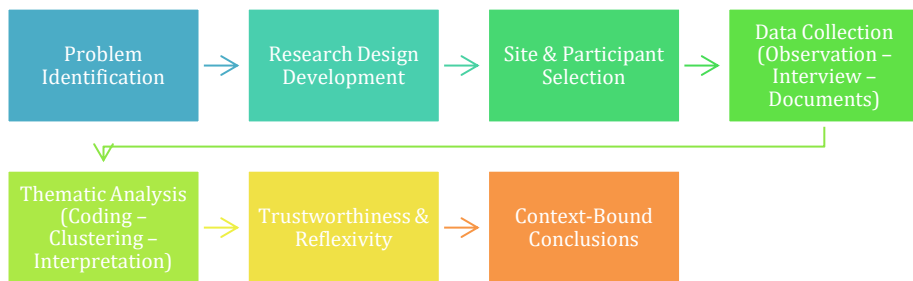
Participants were selected using purposive sampling with clearly defined inclusion criteria. The study involved 15 children aged 5–6 years who regularly participated in dhuha prayer routines, two classroom teachers, one assistant teacher, one principal, and one coordinator of religious activities. Children were included based on classroom enrollment, consistent participation in prayer activities, and parental consent for observation. Due to developmental considerations, formal in-depth interviews were conducted only with adult participants, while children's experiences were approached through naturalistic classroom observation.

Data were collected through non-participant structured observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on behavioral indicators of regulatory processes, including attentional engagement, impulse control, rule-following, and emotional composure during prayer activities. Interviews explored educators' reflections on the meaning, pedagogical intentions, and perceived regulatory dimensions of dhuha prayer habituation. Institutional documents related to religious routines and program implementation were also examined to contextualize findings.

Data analysis followed a systematic interpretive phenomenological procedure. Interview transcripts and field notes were first transcribed and read repeatedly to achieve immersion. Meaning units were identified inductively and organized into initial codes. These codes were then clustered into themes related to behavioral regulation, emotional modulation, attentional focus, and pedagogical meaning. The final stage involved interpretive synthesis, situating emergent themes within established

developmental psychology frameworks of self-regulation. Rather than combining multiple unrelated analytic models, the study applied thematic interpretation consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed prolonged engagement, triangulation across multiple data sources, member checking with teacher participants, and maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytic decisions. Reflexive memos were used throughout the research process to examine the researcher's positionality and interpretive assumptions. Ethical approval was obtained from the institution before data collection. Written informed consent was secured from adult participants and parents of child participants. All identities were anonymized, and data were treated confidentially without disrupting routine educational activities.



**Figure 1.** Research Flow of Interpretive Phenomenological Study

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Behavioral Regulation within the Dhuha Prayer Routine

Behavioral regulation in this study is operationally defined as children's observable ability to follow the sequence of the dhuha prayer, maintain their physical position, and comply with activity rules without continuous teacher prompting. This definition focuses exclusively on observable behavior rather than inferred internal states.

Interview data indicate perceived differences in behavioral order during the ritual. The classroom teacher explained, "At the beginning, many children talked during prayer, but now most of them can complete the movements without being repeatedly reminded." Similarly, the principal stated, "They appear more

orderly during prayer compared to free-play activities, although some children still need direction.”

Observational records support these statements with qualifications. Most children followed the prayer sequence in order, maintaining their positions for most of the activity. However, two children consistently left the line and required verbal correction. In several sessions, peer reminders were observed, where one child asked another to stand properly.

Restating the findings, behavioral compliance was more visible within the structured context of the ritual than in less structured classroom situations. The data do not demonstrate developmental change over time but highlight a context-specific pattern of behavior.

The emerging pattern suggests that the prayer routine's clearly structured, rule-bound nature provides a setting in which orderly behavior is more consistently observable, while still revealing individual variability and the continued need for adult guidance in certain cases.

**Table 1.** Behavioral Regulation During Dhuha Prayer

<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Observation Evidence</b>	<b>Variability Observed</b>	<b>Interpretive Summary</b>
Rule-following behavior	“Most children can complete the movements without repeated reminders.” (Teacher)	The majority followed the sequence; 2 children left the line and required redirection	Some children required consistent prompting	Structured ritual context coincides with more visible rule compliance
Peer regulation	“They remind each other to stay quiet.” (Teacher)	Peer reminders observed in 3 sessions	Not observed in all children	Behavioral order is occasionally supported by peer interaction

As summarized in Table 1, rule-following behavior and instances of peer regulation were observed during the dhuha prayer routine. While the majority of children were able to follow the structured sequence with limited prompting, variability remained evident, particularly among children who required repeated

redirection. These findings indicate that behavioral order was contextually observable within the structured ritual setting.

### **3.2. Emotional Regulation within the Prayer Context**

Emotional regulation is operationally defined here as children’s observable ability to maintain a calm demeanor, reduce reactive expressions, and demonstrate emotional readiness during and immediately after the dhuha prayer activity.

Interview responses suggest situational emotional stabilization. An assistant teacher stated, “After the prayer, the classroom atmosphere is usually calmer, and children do not immediately run around.” The religious activity coordinator added, “Some children who are usually easily irritated seem more controlled during prayer, although this calmness does not always last.”

Field observations indicate that during the recitation phase, children’s body movements decreased and their vocal intensity softened compared to the pre-prayer period. Facial expressions appeared more relaxed during the activity. However, during transitions to subsequent learning activities, several children resumed high levels of movement and energetic interaction.

Restated, the data indicate that emotional settling occurs during the ritual context itself, but this effect appears situational rather than uniformly sustained throughout the school day.

The overall pattern shows that the ritual's calm, rhythmic structure coincides with observable emotional quieting in many children, while variations persist and emotional reactivity may reemerge outside the ritual setting.

**Table 2** Emotional Regulation Within Ritual Context

<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Observation Evidence</b>	<b>Variability Observed</b>	<b>Interpretive Summary</b>
Emotional settling during prayer	“The classroom feels calmer after prayer.” (Assistant Teacher)	Reduced movement and softer voices during recitation	Some children returned to high activity after the transition	Ritual setting associated with situational calm
Reduced reactive expressions	“Some children seem more controlled.” (Coordinator)	Fewer visible outbursts during the ritual context	Not uniform across participants	Emotional stabilization appears context-bound

Table 2 highlights two primary observable patterns within the ritual setting: situational emotional settling and a temporary reduction in overt reactive expressions. Although a calmer behavioral presentation was frequently noted during the activity, the return of energetic behavior in subsequent transitions indicates that this pattern remained activity-specific.

### **3.3. Attention and Focus during the Dhuha Prayer**

Attention and focus are operationally defined as children’s observable capacity to remain visually and physically engaged in the prayer sequence, listen to instructions, and sustain participation throughout the structured activity.

According to the classroom teacher, “Children are now able to follow the full sequence without frequently looking around.” The principal similarly commented, “They seem more ready to receive instructions after prayer, although not every child shows the same level of concentration.”

Observation records show that most children maintained engagement for approximately four to six minutes during each rakaat sequence. A small number of children displayed distractibility, such as turning their gaze away or shifting positions, but they generally remained within the activity structure.

In summary, attentional engagement was more consistently observed during the ritual than in less-structured activities. No baseline or comparison group was used; therefore, the findings reflect contextual engagement rather than measured improvement.

The data pattern suggests that predictable sequencing, synchronized movement, and rhythmic pacing may support sustained engagement in the moment, while attentional variability remains present across individuals.

**Table. 3** Attention and Focus During Dhuha Prayer

<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Observation Evidence</b>	<b>Variability Observed</b>	<b>Interpretive Summary</b>
Sustained engagement	“They follow the whole sequence more consistently.” (Teacher)	4–6 minutes sustained focus during rakaat	Several children were briefly distracted	Structured rhythm aligns with sustained engagement

<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Observation Evidence</b>	<b>Variability Observed</b>	<b>Interpretive Summary</b>
Reduced overt distraction	“Less looking around.” (Principal)	Most remained within the activity frame	Mild gaze shifting observed	Ritual order associated with attentional anchoring

The data presented in Table 3 indicate that most children sustained visible engagement for several minutes within the prayer sequence, particularly during each rakaat. Although brief instances of gaze shifting and posture adjustment were noted, participation generally remained within the structured activity frame.

### ***3.4. Emerging Initiative and Internalization within the Ritual Context***

Internalization is operationally defined in observable terms as children’s initiation of participation in dhuha prayer activities without direct prompting and their ability to maintain appropriate behavior with reduced external instruction. No claims are made regarding abstract spiritual cognition; rather, observable initiative and responsibility are emphasized.

The classroom teacher noted, “Some children prepare their prayer mats before being asked.” The principal explained, “They appear more responsible during worship, even when supervision is minimal, although this is not consistent for all children.”

Observations confirmed instances where children independently prepared prayer materials and reminded peers to stand properly. However, not all participants displayed such behaviors consistently, and some still depended heavily on teacher instructions.

Restated, the data indicate the emergence of observable initiative during the ritual context, though this cannot be equated with fully internalized moral or spiritual awareness.

The pattern suggests a gradual shift for some children from exclusive reliance on teacher direction toward more self-initiated participation within the structured religious routine, while maintaining clear evidence of individual variation.

**Table 4: Emerging Initiative within Ritual Participation**

<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Observation Evidence</b>	<b>Variability Observed</b>	<b>Interpretive Summary</b>
-----------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------

Independent preparation	“Some prepare prayer mats without being asked.” (Teacher)	Independent preparation was observed in several children	Not consistent across all participants	Initiative emerges in a structured context
Peer-directed correction	“They remind friends to stand straight.” (Principal)	Peer correction is observed occasionally	Limited to certain children	Early signs of socially oriented self-control

The information displayed in Table 4 indicates that independent preparation and occasional peer-directed correction were observable among several participants during the ritual routine. However, these behaviors were not distributed uniformly, as a number of children continued to rely on teacher instruction.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

To clarify the structural relationship among the four emergent themes identified in the Results section, Figure 2 visually synthesizes how behavioral regulation, emotional settling, attentional engagement, and emerging initiative were situated within the structured ritual context. The diagram represents contextual alignment of observable behaviors rather than causal developmental change.

## Self-Regulation Observations During the Dhuha Prayer Routine



**Figure 2.** Thematic Relationship Among Observable Self-Regulation Patterns During the Dhuha Prayer Routine

The findings are presented in Table 1. The findings indicating more visible rule-following behavior within the structured dhuha prayer routine are consistent with the developmental psychology literature, which emphasizes the role of predictable and organized environments in supporting young children’s behavioral regulation. Research has shown that structured routines provide external scaffolding that helps children anticipate expectations and adjust their behavior accordingly [27], [28]. Similar findings in early childhood classroom research suggest that predictable sequences reduce ambiguity and promote compliance with rules [29]. However, unlike experimental interventions designed specifically to enhance self-regulation, the present findings emerge from naturally occurring religious practice. This contextual distinction suggests that structured routines embedded within cultural or religious settings may function in ways comparable to secular routines. However, the religious dimension itself cannot be isolated as the causal factor.

In contrast to experimental self-regulation interventions that employ pre- and post-testing, standardized executive function tasks, or structured behavioral measurement, the present study adopted an interpretive phenomenological and naturalistic design. This methodological distinction likely accounts for the absence of measurable developmental claims and the emphasis on situational behavioral alignment rather than skill acquisition. Furthermore, the participants in this study were children aged five to six years in a faith-based educational setting, which differs from laboratory-based or secular intervention contexts. These methodological and contextual differences may explain variations in how regulatory behaviors were observed and interpreted.

The observed variability, particularly the presence of children who continued to require repeated prompting, is aligned with developmental research emphasizing individual differences in regulatory capacities. Self-regulation in early childhood is shaped by temperament, prior socialization experiences, and adult support [30], [31]. The fact that some children did not consistently maintain orderly behavior indicates that ritual structure does not automatically produce uniform regulatory outcomes. Rather, behavioral regulation appears to emerge through ongoing interaction between environmental scaffolding and individual characteristics. This interpretation avoids deterministic conclusions and situates the findings within dynamic developmental models.

From a functional perspective, the structured ritual context appears to provide a social setting in which behavioral order becomes more visible and sustained during the activity itself. Morning routines characterized by predictability and shared expectations are known to support classroom climate and reduce behavioral disruption [32]. In this sense, the dhuha prayer routine may serve as a regulatory context that temporarily organizes children's behavior within a shared framework. However, because this study did not include baseline comparisons or longitudinal measures, the findings should be understood as describing contextual behavioral alignment rather than developmental improvement.

From a structural perspective, the correlation between ritual participation and orderly behavior may be explained by features

inherent in the activity. Clear sequencing, synchronized movement, collective participation, and shared focus provide conditions that support co-regulation. Sociocultural theory emphasizes that young children regulate behavior more effectively within structured social interaction guided by adults [33], [34]. Therefore, the relationship observed in this study can be interpreted as emerging from environmental coherence and guided participation rather than direct internal transformation. This explanation grounds the findings within established developmental frameworks while maintaining analytical caution regarding unmeasured internal processes.

At the same time, the convergence between the present findings and prior research on structured classroom routines may be attributed to shared environmental characteristics, including predictability, repetition, collective pacing, and adult scaffolding. These features are widely recognized as supportive contexts for situational regulation in early childhood education. Therefore, the consistency of findings across both secular and religious routine-based settings likely reflects common structural principles rather than context-specific spiritual mechanisms.

The findings summarized in Table 2. Patterns of emotional quieting observed during the dhuha prayer correspond with literature emphasizing the importance of environmental structure in shaping young children's affective responses. Studies in developmental psychology indicate that rhythmic, predictable activities can temporarily lower physiological and behavioral activation levels, thereby supporting short-term emotional stabilization [35], [36]. Research in classroom climate further notes that collective routines implemented in calm settings may reduce visible emotional reactivity, especially during transitional periods [37]. Nevertheless, the current findings derive from a naturally occurring religious routine rather than a designed emotional intervention, and thus should not be interpreted as demonstrating causal psychological change.

Individual differences evident in the data reinforce contemporary understandings of emotional development as situationally regulated rather than uniformly stable. The return of high-energy and expressive behaviors after leaving the ritual setting is consistent with process models of emotion regulation, which describe children's affect as dynamically shaped by

contextual demands and adult guidance [38], [39]. This pattern suggests that observable calmness during the prayer reflects alignment with environmental cues rather than enduring emotional transformation. Consequently, the emotional responses documented here appear sensitive to situational structure rather than fixed personal disposition.

Regarding practical relevance, structured collective rituals may serve as opportunities for affective organization during the school day. Research on early childhood classroom management has shown that emotionally consistent and predictable routines can facilitate smoother engagement in subsequent academic tasks [40]. In this sense, the dhuha prayer context may contribute to momentary classroom stability by synchronizing attention and reducing overt agitation. However, because no baseline measurements or longitudinal follow-up were conducted, the findings are best understood as context-specific alignment rather than developmental advancement.

Examining underlying processes, several structural characteristics of the ritual likely contribute to the observed pattern. The coordinated pacing of movement, shared recitation, collective stillness, and reduced environmental stimulation may create conditions supportive of co-regulation. Developmental theory highlights that children's emotional adjustment is often mediated through shared regulatory systems involving adults and peers rather than autonomous control [41]. Therefore, the calmer affective expression during prayer may be associated with social synchrony and environmental coherence rather than with internalized spiritual mechanisms. This interpretation grounds the findings within established regulatory frameworks while avoiding speculative assumptions about unmeasured internal cognition.

As shown in Table 3. Observed patterns of sustained engagement during the dhuha prayer resonate with existing scholarship on attentional development in early childhood. Studies in cognitive and educational psychology indicate that predictable task structure and clearly sequenced activities can support children's capacity to maintain situational attention [42], [43]. Activities involving coordinated movement and verbal cues have also been associated with increased momentary attentional engagement through multisensory alignment [44]. Nevertheless,

the present findings derive from naturalistic observation within a religious routine rather than from controlled attentional training. They should therefore be interpreted as reflecting contextual participation rather than attentional enhancement.

The presence of mild distractibility among some children is consistent with developmental literature describing attention as gradually consolidating across early childhood years [45]. Short shifts of gaze or posture do not necessarily indicate regulatory failure but reflect normative variability in sustained attention at ages five to six. The fact that most children remained within the structured activity despite brief attentional shifts suggests that the activity environment may provide stabilizing cues. Importantly, this pattern should not be interpreted as generalized improvement, given the absence of comparison measures across different contexts.

Considering practical implications, structured ritual activities may function as settings that support temporary attentional anchoring during collective engagement. Educational research has shown that organized morning routines and clearly defined participation formats contribute to smoother transitions into learning tasks [46]. In this sense, the dhuha prayer context may help align children's focus at the beginning of the school day. However, because no quantitative indicators of attention span were employed, the findings remain descriptive of observed engagement patterns rather than demonstrative of measurable cognitive growth.

Exploring underlying mechanisms, the attentional stability observed during the ritual may relate to synchronized pacing, collective stillness, and the integration of visual, auditory, and motor components. Theoretical perspectives on guided participation emphasize that shared structured activity can channel children's attention through coordinated social frameworks [47], [48]. Thus, the correlation between ritual participation and observable focus can be interpreted as emerging from environmental organization and social synchrony rather than internal executive modification. This explanation situates the findings within established developmental theory while maintaining analytical restraint regarding unmeasured cognitive processes.

As illustrated in Table 4. The appearance of independent preparation and peer-directed reminders within the ritual setting corresponds with developmental perspectives on the gradual emergence of self-directed behavior in early childhood. Theories of internalization propose that children initially regulate conduct through external guidance before progressively assuming more autonomous responsibility [49], [50]. Classroom research further indicates that consistent participation in rule-governed group activities can foster observable initiative, particularly when expectations are stable and socially reinforced [51]. Within this framework, the actions documented in the present study may reflect early forms of responsibility embedded in social practice rather than abstract spiritual comprehension.

The uneven distribution of such behaviors among participants aligns with research highlighting developmental variability in the transition from externally guided compliance to self-initiated participation [52]. Some children remained dependent on teacher prompting, suggesting that initiative does not emerge uniformly even within structured environments. Developmental literature emphasizes that internalization is a gradual, socially mediated process influenced by relational climate and repetition rather than a sudden cognitive shift [53]. Accordingly, the behaviors observed here should be interpreted as situated actions within a relational setting rather than definitive indicators of fully consolidated self-regulation.

In terms of functional significance, observable initiative during collective routines may contribute to classroom stability and shared responsibility. When children begin preparing materials independently or reminding peers, instructional load on adults may be reduced, and social cooperation may increase [54]. At the same time, the limited consistency across participants suggests that the ritual context provides opportunity rather than guarantee for such behaviors. The practical implication is that structured communal routines can serve as platforms for emerging responsibility, though outcomes remain shaped by individual disposition and classroom interaction patterns.

Considering underlying processes, the correlation between ritual participation and emerging initiative may be attributable to repeated exposure to consistent expectations combined with visible

peer modeling. Social learning theory emphasizes that children adopt and reproduce behaviors observed in salient group contexts [54]. The collective and repetitive format of the activity may provide cues that gradually reduce reliance on direct adult supervision. Thus, rather than attributing these behaviors to abstract internal spiritual transformation, the pattern can be understood as socially mediated participation within a structured moral environment. This interpretation situates the findings within established developmental frameworks while remaining cautious about unobservable internal states.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in reframing religious ritual as a socially organized regulatory context rather than a direct causal agent of psychological development. By situating dhuha prayer within developmental frameworks of environmental scaffolding and guided participation, this study bridges research in early childhood religious education with contemporary theory on self-regulation. This interdisciplinary positioning clarifies how culturally embedded practices may be examined without resorting to deterministic spiritual or neurocognitive claims.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that early childhood educators in both faith-based and secular settings may consider the structural features of collective routines as potential supports for observable behavioral organization. Predictable sequencing, synchronized movement, shared attention, and repetition appear to create conditions in which regulatory behaviors become more visible and stable within specific classroom contexts. The implication is not that religious content inherently enhances self-regulation, but that structured, socially coordinated activities may serve as situational regulatory scaffolds in educational practice.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study does not claim that the habit of performing the dhuha prayer causes the development of self-regulation. Rather, the findings indicate that within the observed educational setting, the structured and repetitive nature of the dhuha prayer coincided with observable patterns of behavioral order, situational emotional calming, attentional engagement, and emerging initiative among

some children. These findings are context-bound descriptions derived from phenomenological interpretation and naturalistic observation. They reflect how religious ritual functioned as a lived pedagogical context in which regulatory behaviors were visible, rather than demonstrating developmental trajectories, internal mechanisms, or sustained transfer across settings.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue by documenting how religious ritual is experienced within early childhood education in relation to observable regulatory behaviors. Instead of positioning prayer as a causal stimulus, the study frames it as a socially structured environment shaped by repetition, collective participation, and adult guidance. This interpretation aligns the findings with broader developmental perspectives on environmental scaffolding and guided participation, without asserting neurocognitive or internal spiritual transformation.

Several methodological limitations must be explicitly acknowledged. The study was conducted at a single educational site and relied on naturalistic observation and educator interviews without baseline comparison, control groups, or longitudinal follow-up. As a phenomenological inquiry, the study cannot verify internalization processes, sustained regulatory change, or cross-context transfer. The interpretive nature of the analysis also carries the possibility of researcher bias despite efforts toward reflexivity and triangulation. Furthermore, the absence of standardized behavioral measurement limits the ability to assess the magnitude or durability of observed patterns.

Future research should address these constraints directly. Multi-site studies could examine how similar rituals function across diverse cultural or institutional contexts. Longitudinal designs would be necessary to explore stability or change over time. Studies incorporating behavioral coding systems, comparison groups, or complementary qualitative and quantitative approaches may provide clearer insight into mechanisms, contextual influences, and boundary conditions. Rather than assuming inherent psychological effects of religious practice, further investigation should critically examine structural, relational, and environmental factors that may account for observed regulatory behaviors.

## REFERENCES

- [1] M. Vink *et al.*, "Towards an integrated account of the development of self-regulation from a neurocognitive perspective: A framework for current and future longitudinal multi-modal investigations," *Dev. Cogn. Neurosci.*, vol. 45, no. October 2019, p. 100829, 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.dcn.2020.100829.
- [2] M. Cacciari, "Massimo Cacciari," vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 13–22, 2005.
- [3] D. D. onathan Heard, Claire Scoular and D. R. and I. Teo, "Skill Development Framework," *Crit. Think.*, p. 26, 2020, [Online]. Available: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/287816564.pdf>
- [4] N. Zink, A. Lenartowicz, and S. Markett, "A new era for executive function research: On the transition from centralized to distributed executive functioning," *Neurosci. Biobehav. Rev.*, vol. 124, no. September 2020, pp. 235–244, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2021.02.011.
- [5] P. N. Anisah, W. Hapsari, and W. Kusumatuti, "MEMBANGUN KEDISIPLINAN ANAK USIA DINI DI TENGAH BUDAYA GENTLE PARENTING," *J. Psikol. dan Bimbing. Konseling*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 1–10, 2025.
- [6] K. Pahigiannis and M. Glos, "Peer influences in self-regulation development and interventions in early childhood," *Early Child Dev. Care*, vol. 190, no. 7, pp. 1053–1064, 2020, doi: 10.1080/03004430.2018.1513923.
- [7] H. Hasmalena *et al.*, "Pengembangan Media Video Animasi 2D Materi Regulasi Diri untuk Masa Transisi ke SD," *J. Obs. J. Pendidik. Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 637–646, 2023, doi: 10.31004/obsesi.v7i1.3632.
- [8] H. Hermahayu, R. Rasidi, and A. A. Zahra, "Disiplin Positif dalam Meningkatkan Regulasi Emosi dan Perilaku Sosial Anak: Studi Kualitatif pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini di Kabupaten Magelang," *J. Obs. J. Pendidik. Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 905–920, 2025, doi: 10.31004/obsesi.v9i3.6909.
- [9] N. Dwi *et al.*, "Strategi Guru dalam Menumbuhkan Regulasi Diri Melalui Kegiatan Project Based Learning," vol. 08, no. 02,

pp. 73–86, 2026.

- [10] Dewi Ratna Mutu Manikam, “KONSEP PEMBELAJARAN HOLISTIK INTEGRATIF DALAM PENDIDIKAN ANAK USIA DINI : ANALISIS TEORETIS DAN REGULASI DI ERA DIGITAL,” vol. 8, no. 1, 2026.
- [11] C. E. Campenni and A. Hartman, “The Effects of Completing Mandalas on Mood, Anxiety, and State Mindfulness,” *Art Ther.*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 25–33, 2020, doi: 10.1080/07421656.2019.1669980.
- [12] S. Beliefs, “The Role of Ritual in Children’s Acquisition of Supernatural Beliefs,” pp. 1–21, 2023.
- [13] K. H. Lesage, K. A., Ghossainy, M. E., Richert, R. A., & Corriveau, “Cultural transmission and acquisition in the development of religious thinking,” pp. 1–21, 2023.
- [14] S. Milah, S. Syihabuddin, M. A. Somad, and M. Hidayat, “Religious Character Education in Early Childhood Through Habituation Method,” pp. 5–9, 2023, doi: 10.4108/eai.26-11-2022.2339549.
- [15] Sopia Aprilia Ningsih, Achmad Muharram Basyari, Anie Rohaeni, and Roni Nugraha, “Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai Keagamaan dalam Membentuk Sikap Religius Anak Usia Dini,” *Didakt. J. Kependidikan*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 3803–3818, 2025, doi: 10.58230/27454312.2860.
- [16] S. Khairul Abdillah Harahap, Sofia Yunus Putri, “PERAN SHALAT DHUHA BERJAMAAH DALAM MEMPERKUAT SPIRITUALITAS DAN DISIPLIN SISWA SDIT SALSABILA AL MUTHI’IN BANGUNTAPAN YOGYAKARTA,” vol. 10, 2025.
- [17] M. Nur Ghufroon and Rini Risnawati Suminta, “Hubungan antara kepercayaan epistemologis dengan belajar berbasis regulasi diri,” *J. Psikol. Insight*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 40–54, 2017, [Online]. Available: <https://zenodo.org/record/824610#.WYrO-ISGMdU>
- [18] P. E. King, S. A. Hardy, and S. Noe, “Developmental Perspectives on Adolescent Religious and Spiritual Development,” *Adolesc. Res. Rev.*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 253–264,

2021, doi: 10.1007/s40894-021-00159-0.

- [19] D. N. Rachmah, "Regulasi Diri dalam Belajar pada Mahasiswa yang Memiliki Peran Banyak," *J. Psikol.*, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 61, 2015, doi: 10.22146/jpsi.6943.
- [20] Izdiharunnisa, Hasanuddin, and Lubis S, "Pengaruh Self Regulated Learning Religiusitas Terhadap Student Engagement Pada Siswa Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Muallimin Univa Medan," *Edukasi Islam. J. Pendidik. Islam*, vol. 12, pp. 2183–2195, 2023, doi: 10.30868/ei.v12i03.4593.
- [21] A. N. Hikmah, Robingatin, and W. Saugi, "Analisis Aspek Perkembangan Anak Pada Kegiatan Shalat Dhuha," *Educ. J. Pendidikan, Pengajaran, dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 169–181, 2022, doi: 10.21462/educasia.v7i2.74.
- [22] M. C. Mustafa, "Cultivating resilience and self-regulation in Malaysian early childhood education: Bridging cultural insights and educational practices," *Acta Psychol. (Amst.)*, vol. 261, no. August, p. 105941, 2025, doi: 10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105941.
- [23] B. S. Turner, "Ritual, belief and habituation: Religion and religions from the axial age to the Anthropocene," *Eur. J. Soc. Theory*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 132–145, 2017, doi: 10.1177/1368431016645355.
- [24] D. Winchester, "Embodying the faith: Religious practice and the making of a muslim moral habitus," *Soc. Forces*, vol. 86, no. 4, pp. 1753–1780, 2008, doi: 10.1353/sof.0.0038.
- [25] A. R. Lubis, K. F. Nasution, R. Ardana, and R. N. Siregar, "Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Agama Pada Masa Kanak – Kanak," vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 981–991, 2025.
- [26] T. Tarsono, A. S. Mansyur, and U. Ruswandi, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Moral Agama pada Pendidikan Taman Kanak-Kanak," *Psymphatic J. Ilm. Psikol.*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 141–154, 2020, doi: 10.15575/psy.v7i1.7604.
- [27] M. Mayra *et al.*, "Explorando el rol de las rutinas diarias en la formación de habilidades sociales y emocionales en la primera infancia Exploring the role of daily routines in the development of social and emotional skills in early

childhood,” vol. 5, 2024.

- [28] R. S. Haryanti, D. Rejeki, A. Badi’ah, Wijayan, and S. I. Laili, *Perkembangan Anak Dan Kepuasan Orang Tua (1)*. 2024.
- [29] J. R. Lelonkiewicz and C. Gambi, “Making oneself predictable in linguistic interactions,” *Acta Psychol. (Amst)*., vol. 209, no. January, p. 103125, 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.actpsy.2020.103125.
- [30] I. W. Pratiwi and S. Wahyuni, “Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Self Regulation Remaja Dalam Bersosialisasi,” *1 Jp3Sdm*, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 4, 2019.
- [31] K. Terhadap, P. Konsumtif, and P. Dewasa, “PENGARUH PENGALAMAN EMOSIONAL MASA KANAK-,” vol. 4, no. 1, 2026.
- [32] V. Azevedo, S. Caridade, M. A. P. Dinis, L. M. Nunes, and A. Sani, “School climate and students’ disruptive behavior: Perceptions of school professionals,” *Curr. Psychol.*, vol. 42, no. 12, pp. 10012–10024, 2023, doi: 10.1007/s12144-021-02181-w.
- [33] E. Kurniati, “Teori Sosiokultural Vygotsky untuk Anak Usia Dini,” vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 19–24, 2025.
- [34] M. N. Titi Lestari, “Identitas Finansial Anak Usia Dini melalui Pendekatan Sosiokultural dalam Literasi Keuangan,” vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 167–186, 2021.
- [35] M. Lang, J. Krátký, and D. Xygalatas, “Effects of predictable behavioral patterns on anxiety dynamics,” *Sci. Rep.*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2022, doi: 10.1038/s41598-022-23885-4.
- [36] R. M. Laloan, “Efek Terapi Musik Klasik Terhadap Stabilitas Hemodinamik: Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis,” *JUKEJ J. Kesehat. Jompa*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 103–116, 2025, doi: 10.57218/jkj.vol4.iss1.1393.
- [37] M. A. Avellaneda and G. Kamenetzky, “Regulation of the stress response by social buffering: A review across species,” *Interam. J. Psychol.*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 1–31, 2021, doi: 10.30849/ripij.v55i1.1439.

- [38] dan D. W. L. P. Baiq Annisa Salwa Fadia, Syamsul Hadi, "ANALISIS REGULASI EMOSI DALAM MENJALANKAN PERANNYA SEBAGAI PENDIDIK PADA GURU BERKEBUTUHAN KHUSUS," vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 167–186, 2021.
- [39] N. S. Tazkia, N. Islamiah, and F. Ekologi, "Gaya pengasuhan dan regulasi emosi serta pengaruhnya terhadap agresivitas remaja di jakarta pusat," vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 65–84, 2026.
- [40] C. S. Bailey, A. R. Ondrusek, T. W. Curby, and S. A. Denham, "Teachers' consistency of emotional support moderates the association between young children's regulation capacities and their preschool adjustment," *Psychol. Sch.*, vol. 59, no. 6, pp. 1051–1074, 2022, doi: 10.1002/pits.22659.
- [41] B. Paley and N. J. Hajal, "Conceptualizing Emotion Regulation and Coregulation as Family-Level Phenomena," *Clin. Child Fam. Psychol. Rev.*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 19–43, 2022, doi: 10.1007/s10567-022-00378-4.
- [42] C. L. Gallen *et al.*, "Contribution of sustained attention abilities to real-world academic skills in children," *Sci. Rep.*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–11, 2023, doi: 10.1038/s41598-023-29427-w.
- [43] D. Nurhaliza, I. N. O. Abadi, M. S. Achmad, P. P. Pramudita, and S. M. I. S, *Peran Pendekatan Psikologi Dalam Mengoptimalkan Perkembangan Kognitif Anak Melalui Pendidikan*, no. 3. 2023.
- [44] A. Bobin-Bègue, "Performing spontaneous motor tempo improves children's attentional performance," *J. Appl. Dev. Psychol.*, vol. 83, no. August, 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.appdev.2022.101467.
- [45] C. A. Azzahra, Yona & Jaya, "Analisis Perkembangan Motorik Kasar Melalui Permainan Menangkap Dan Melempar Bola Pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun," *J. Basic Educ. Stud.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 2188–2195, 2025.
- [46] P. Angga and H. Elminero, "Rise and Learn: Understanding the Morning Shift from the Perspectives of Students," *J. Interdiscip. Perspect.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 180–188, 2025, doi: 10.69569/jip.2024.0676.
- [47] L. Sudiyono, "Model partisipasi masyarakat," *Kaliwangi Offset Yogyakarta*, pp. 4–11, 2016.

- [48] R. A. Sari, M. F. Z. Siregar, and N. Nurhamidah, "Partisipasi Orang Tua Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini," *Cybern. J. Educ. Res. Soc. Stud.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 10–22, 2024, doi: 10.51178/cjerss.v5i3.2019.
- [49] C. Wesarg-Menzel *et al.*, "Development and socialization of self-regulation from infancy to adolescence: A meta-review differentiating between self-regulatory abilities, goals, and motivation," *Dev. Rev.*, vol. 69, no. December 2022, p. 101090, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2023.101090.
- [50] F. Wardah, D. Hastuti, and D. Krisnatuti, "Pengaruh Metode Sosialisasi Orangtua Dan Kontrol Diri Terhadap Karakter Sopan Santun Remaja," *J. Pendidik. Karakter*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2019, doi: 10.21831/jpk.v9i2.22142.
- [51] M. A. Janssen, T. Falk, R. Meinzen-Dick, and B. Vollan, "Using games for social learning to promote self-governance," *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.*, vol. 62, p. 101289, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.cosust.2023.101289.
- [52] A. K. Holt, E. Drasgow, and K. Wolfe, "Training Teachers of Children With Moderate to Significant Support Needs to Contingently Respond to Child-Initiated Social Participation Behaviors During Centers," *Res. Pract. Pers. with Sev. Disabil.*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 88–106, 2024, doi: 10.1177/15407969241237809.
- [53] H. A. Cavanaugh, "Aeroderivative flywheels target spikes and sags," *Electr. World*, vol. 209, no. 9, pp. 65–66, 1995.
- [54] S. Bingham, V. ka Grau, and D. Bo, "Development of Metacognition and Self- Regulated Learning in Young Children: Role of Collaborative and Peer- Assisted Learning," pp. 433–455.