

Enhancing Early Childhood Character Education Values Through The Practice Method: A Classroom Action Research Study

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Abstract

Character education in early childhood has become increasingly urgent amid concerns about children's declining discipline, independence, responsibility, and social skills. Preliminary observation in Group B of TK Alam Al Khair, a nature-based kindergarten in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, showed that most children remained in the Not Yet Developed (BB) and Beginning to Develop (MB) categories, with only 17% reaching Developing as Expected (BSH) or Very Well Developed (BSB). This study aimed to improve children's character-education values through the practice (drill) method, which emphasizes structured and repeated practice of target behaviors. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart model was implemented over two cycles, each comprising planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, using a descriptive-qualitative and quantitative-descriptive approach. Participants were 20 children selected through total sampling. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using interactive qualitative analysis, percentage achievement, and normalized gain (N-gain). The mean BSH+BSB achievement across five indicators (religious values, independence, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation) increased from 17% at pre-cycle to 46% in Cycle I and 82% in Cycle II, exceeding the success criterion, with N-gain values of 0.71 to 0.88 (high category). In Cycle II, the practice method was reinforced with achievement stars, nature-based group projects, and

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a home-school communication book. These findings suggest that structured practice combined with visual reinforcement, contextual nature-based activities, and parental involvement can support the strengthening of character-education values in early childhood.

Keywords: character education; practice method; early childhood education; classroom action research; nature-based learning

INTRODUCTION

Character education in early childhood has attracted growing global attention amid rising concern over the moral and behavioral degradation of younger generations across many parts of the world. Bullying, excessive dependence on digital devices, and declining social empathy among children are concrete indicators that instilling character values from an early age can no longer be postponed. Adwiah and Diana (2023) found that uncontrolled gadget use in early childhood significantly affects children's social development, including a reduced capacity for direct interaction and empathy toward their surroundings. This issue transcends national boundaries: Yao and Enright (2022) examined how family and school factors moderate prosocial behavior in late childhood and early adolescence, showing that character formation is a continuous process shaped by multiple, overlapping layers of a child's social environment. At the international level, Jaedun and Manaf (2020) argued that early-childhood character education should be integrated with local wisdom and multicultural values to remain relevant to the socio-cultural context in which children grow, underscoring that character education is not merely a national agenda in Indonesia but part of an evolving global educational discourse.

Theoretically, early-childhood character formation rests on several complementary grand theories. Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Bandura's social learning theory serve as principal references explaining that children's moral behavior is shaped through modeling, reinforcement, and the consistent repetition of actions within their social environment. This line of thinking gave rise to the habituation approach, believed to be effective for character formation during the "golden age," the period in which children's cognitive and emotional structures are most receptive to environmental stimulation. Rukiyati, Siswoyo, and Hendrowibowo (2023) confirmed that moral-value instillation in early childhood at faith-based institutions is achieved through a combination of modeling, habituation, and positive reinforcement applied repeatedly



and consistently by educators. This theoretical evolution subsequently produced the practice (drill) method, an instructional strategy that emphasizes the structured repetition of specific actions until the desired character value becomes an internalized habit rather than merely cognitive knowledge.

Despite this well-established theoretical foundation, implementation in the field continues to face considerable challenges. Many early-childhood educators tend to convey character values verbally or through lecturing, without consistent, repeated practice, so that the values being taught fail to become internalized as observable behavior. Fidesrinur, Fitria, and Lestari (2023) reported that moral learning among children aged 4-6 years is frequently constrained by a limited variety of methods capable of training children continuously, resulting in uneven character achievement across individuals. This problem is increasingly urgent given that early childhood constitutes a critical period that cannot be repeated; failure to instill character during this phase risks producing long-term consequences for moral and social quality in adulthood. Sinta, Malaikosa, and Supriyanto (2022) emphasized that character-education reinforcement that is not implemented systematically from an early age risks eroding discipline and responsibility at subsequent educational levels.

This problem was also identified at TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung, specifically in Group B. Preliminary observation revealed that some children in this group still exhibited undisciplined behavior, low self-confidence, and limited independence in completing simple tasks such as tidying up toys or queuing in an orderly manner. TK Alam Al Khair itself has the distinct character of a nature-based early-childhood education (PAUD) institution that emphasizes exploratory learning and children's direct experience with their surrounding environment; consequently, the character-instillation method applied should ideally be contextual and repetitive rather than purely instructional. This condition aligns with the findings of Mashudi (2024), who showed that partnership between teachers and parents strongly determines the success of instilling responsibility in children aged 5-6 years, because consistency of habituation at school needs to be reinforced through similar practice at home. Likewise, Ningsih, Prasetyo, and Hasanah (2022) demonstrated that a nature-based learning approach (natural-material learning centers) provides optimal space for children to practice character values directly through concrete experience, which is highly relevant to the characteristics of TK Alam Al Khair.

Although research on early-childhood character education through habituation is relatively abundant, studies that specifically examine the practice method - as distinct from



general habituation - as a strategy for improving character values in Group B at nature-based early-childhood institutions remain very limited. Most prior studies, such as Anggraeni, Elan, and Mulyadi (2021) and a study conducted at TK Al-Azhar II Tebo (Jurnal Riset Multidisiplin Edukasi, 2025), have focused on general disciplinary-habituation methods in conventional kindergartens, while the context of nature-based institutions with exploratory learning approaches has received little attention. Gustira, Nurani, and Wulan (2023) further noted that research on repeated practice methods for character aspects tends to be fragmented and rarely employs a classroom action research (CAR) design that systematically measures character improvement from cycle to cycle. This gap constitutes the novelty of the present study: integrating the practice method as an explicit strategy within an action-research design in the context of a nature-based kindergarten with distinctive learning characteristics - a combination that has not been widely explored in the prior literature, including by Amalia and Hariyanti (2022) and Salam, Ikhwanuddin, and Jamilah (2022), who focused on role-play methods and general approaches to early-childhood character education. As further emphasized by Masrifah (2021) and Oktaviana and Munastiwi (2021), the effectiveness of a character-instillation method strongly depends on its fit with the institutional context in which it is applied.

Building on this background, context, and research gap, the present study aims to analyze efforts to improve children's character-education values through the implementation of the practice method in Group B of TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung, while identifying the extent to which this method effectively enhances discipline, independence, and responsibility among children within a nature-based learning context.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach combined with a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. This approach was chosen because the research objective was not merely to describe the initial condition of children's character values, but to directly intervene in that condition through the practice method until observable and measurable behavioral change occurred. Machali (2022) affirmed that CAR is an appropriate research type for educators seeking to improve their own classroom practice reflectively and continuously, because the teacher functions simultaneously as researcher and practitioner directly involved in the learning process. The action-research design followed the Kemmis and McTaggart model, comprising four stages



within each cycle - planning, acting, observing, and reflecting - proceeding spirally until the predetermined success indicators were achieved. This cyclical model is widely used in similar early-childhood research, as applied by Harahap, Siregar, and Lubis (2023) in enhancing young children's creativity through two action cycles, and by Fadlillah, Rahmawati, and Setyowahyudi (2022) in instilling patriotic values through a cultural-playground medium. The present study was planned across two cycles, on the assumption that if the success indicators were not achieved in the first cycle, corrective action would be undertaken in the following cycle based on joint reflection between the researcher and the classroom teacher.

Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Cycle
(Kemmis & McTaggart Model)

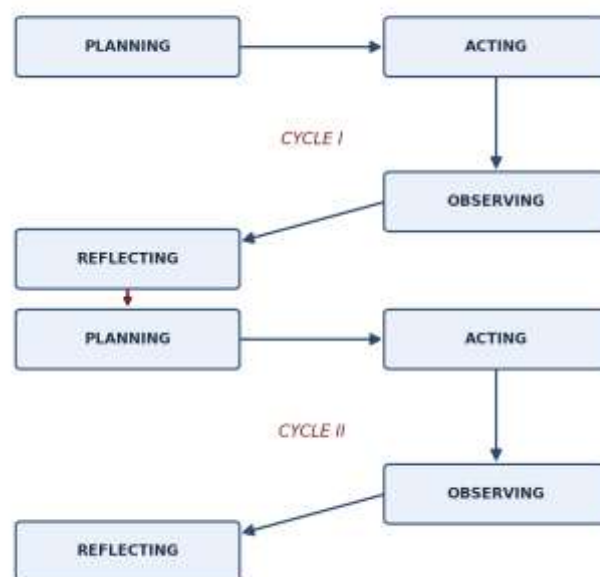


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Design (Kemmis & McTaggart Model)

The method applied within this design was descriptive-qualitative, emphasizing an in-depth understanding of the process of behavioral change in children during the intervention, while also incorporating quantitative data in the form of percentage achievement at each cycle.

This mixed approach is commonly used in studies of character and socio-emotional development in early childhood, as demonstrated by Kartikasari and Muthmainah (2023), who measured the effect of parental coping-skills training on children's emotional intelligence and social skills using descriptive data reinforced by percentages, and by Batubara, Agustini, and Lubis (2023), who combined qualitative observation with quantitative measurement in

enhancing children's socio-emotional development through storytelling. This mixed approach is considered more comprehensive because it captures the qualitative nuance of children's attitudinal change while simultaneously providing measurable evidence of the achievement level of the character indicators under investigatio

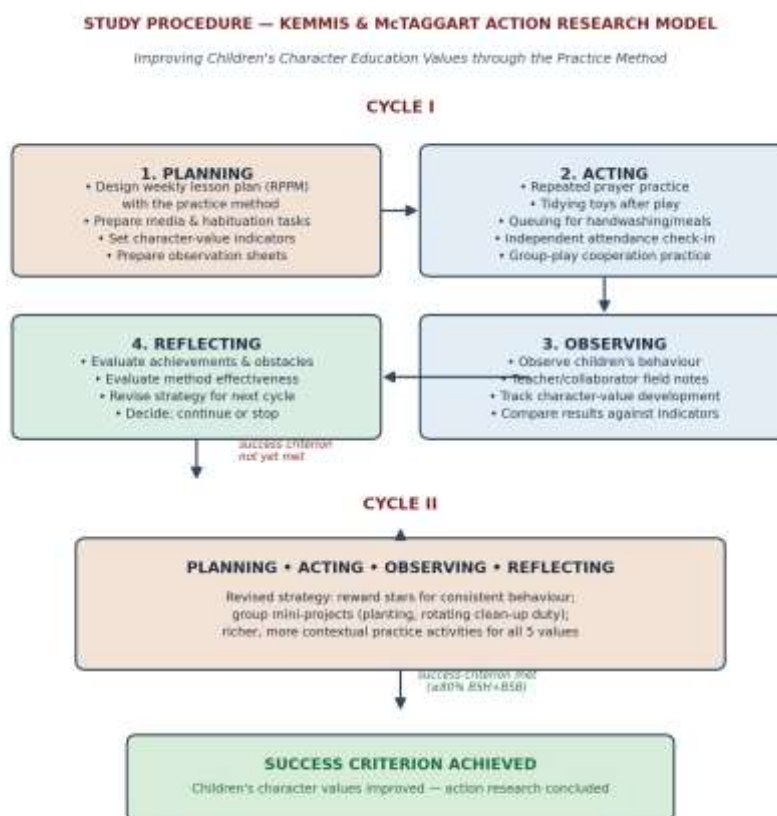


Figure 2. Detailed Research Procedure per Cycle for Group B, TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung

Participants

The participants of this study comprised all children of Group B at TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung in the current academic year (N = 20), selected through total sampling given the

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relatively limited number of children in a single class, which allowed the entire group to be involved as research subjects. Setting the research subjects within a single class of limited size is a common characteristic of classroom action research at the early-childhood level, as seen in the study by Hardiansyah, Rohman, and Deviyanti (2021), which involved one learning group in developing a garden-based learning model to enhance children's prosocial behavior, and the study by Umah and Rakimahwati (2021), which involved a small number of subjects to observe creativity development through sensory play. In addition to children as the primary subjects, the classroom teacher was involved as a research collaborator, participating in the implementation of the action and serving as a supporting data source through reflective interviews at the end of each cycle.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from participatory observation of children's behavior during implementation of the practice method, as well as from semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher and the school principal regarding children's character development before and after the intervention. Secondary data were obtained from documentation, including child-development assessment sheets, anecdotal records, photographs and videos of activities, and curriculum documents together with the daily lesson-implementation plans (RPPH) used at TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung. This combination of observation, interview, and documentation is consistent with data-collection procedures commonly applied in classroom action research at the early-childhood level, as described by Fathurrahman, Suryana, and Zulhijra (2025), who used source triangulation to strengthen the validity of findings on children's social readiness, and by Nisa, Patonah, Prihatiningrum, and Rohita (2021), who emphasized the importance of continuous observation in examining self-awareness and socio-emotional development in early childhood.

Instruments

The instruments used to collect data comprised a character-value development observation sheet constructed around the indicators of discipline, independence, responsibility, and cooperation (plus religious values, described below), an interview guide, and a camera and recording device for activity documentation. The observation sheet was designed with a graded rating scale referring to Indonesia's standard early-childhood developmental achievement



categories: Not Yet Developed (Belum Berkembang, BB), Beginning to Develop (Mulai Berkembang, MB), Developing as Expected (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan, BSH), and Very Well Developed (Berkembang Sangat Baik, BSB), as commonly used in classroom action research at the Indonesian PAUD level, including the study by Gustira, Nurani, and Wulan (2023) on measuring children's problem-solving ability through a traditional game.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted in two complementary stages. Qualitative data analysis followed the interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Quantitative data analysis was performed by calculating the percentage of achievement for each character-value indicator at every cycle to compare results across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages. To provide a more rigorous, Scopus-standard quantification of intervention effectiveness beyond raw percentage comparison, the achievement percentages were additionally analyzed using the normalized gain (N-gain) formula developed by Hake (1998):

$$N\text{-gain } (g) = (\%Post - \%Pre) / (100 - \%Pre)$$

The resulting index was interpreted using Hake's (1998) categorization: high effectiveness ($g \geq 0.70$), medium effectiveness ($0.30 \leq g < 0.70$), and low effectiveness ($g < 0.30$). This combination of qualitative-interactive and quantitative-descriptive analysis, strengthened by N-gain computation, was considered effective for providing a comprehensive picture of both the process and the outcome of children's character-value improvement, consistent with the analytical approach applied in the studies by Fathurrahman, Suryana, and Zulhijra (2025) and Umah and Rakimahwati (2021), which used descriptive-quantitative techniques to reinforce the interpretation of qualitative observational data.

Success Criteria

The research was considered successful if the majority of children - at least 75-80% of the total research subjects - achieved the Developing as Expected (BSH) or Very Well Developed (BSB) categories on the character-value indicators under study.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the classroom action research on improving children's character-education values in Group B of TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung, organized by research stage: pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, followed by a cross-stage recapitulation.

Pre-Cycle Baseline Condition

Preliminary observation was conducted prior to the intervention to obtain an accurate picture of children's character-value achievement in Group B. The classroom teachers involved as collaborators at this stage were Paksi Kalifah K., S.Pd. and Roni Hidayat, S.Pd. for class B1, and Fenitalia Septiana, S.I.Kom. and Nopa Mardiana, A.Md. for class B2. Pre-cycle observation results showed that most children remained in the Not Yet Developed (BB) and Beginning to Develop (MB) categories across all five indicators observed, with the combined Developing as Expected and Very Well Developed (BSH+BSB) achievement reaching only 17% of all children. The cooperation indicator showed the lowest achievement, with 55% of children still in the BB category, characterized by children tending to play alone, being reluctant to share roles, and struggling to complete group tasks with peers. The discipline indicator showed a similar condition, with 50% of children still requiring repeated reminders to arrive on time, queue, and complete daily routines in an orderly manner.

Table 1. Children's Character-Value Achievement in Group B at Pre-Cycle (% and n; n = 20)

Character-Value Indicator	BB % (n)	MB % (n)	BSH % (n)	BSB % (n)	BSH+BSB (%)
Religious values	35 (7)	45 (9)	15 (3)	5 (1)	20
Independence	40 (8)	40 (8)	15 (3)	5 (1)	20
Discipline	50 (10)	35 (7)	10 (2)	5 (1)	15
Responsibility	45 (9)	40 (8)	10 (2)	5 (1)	15
Cooperation	55 (11)	30 (6)	10 (2)	5 (1)	15

This pre-cycle finding is consistent with a review of the School Education Unit Curriculum (KSP) document of TK Alam Al Khair, in its Data-Based Planning (PBD) context-analysis section,

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which states that the school's existing character-habitation program "shows good results but still needs strengthening through more optimal synergy between school and family." The low baseline achievement also aligns with the findings of Fidesrinur, Fitria, and Lestari (2023) that moral learning in children aged 4-6 years is often constrained by a limited variety of continuous practice methods, resulting in uneven character achievement among children. This pre-cycle data served as the baseline for measuring the effectiveness of the practice method in the subsequent cycles.

Implementation and Observation Results of Cycle I

Cycle I action was implemented in four stages - planning, acting, observing, and reflecting - following the Kemmis and McTaggart model. At the planning stage, the researcher and the classroom teacher jointly designed a Weekly Lesson Implementation Plan (RPPM) incorporating the practice method as the core strategy, including practicing prayer before and after activities, practicing tidying toys after play, practicing queuing while washing hands and collecting meals, practicing independent attendance check-in, practicing cooperation during group play, and habituating punctual school arrival. These practice activities were carried out repeatedly every day for two weeks, reinforced by verbal encouragement and teacher modeling.

Cycle I observation results showed a fairly meaningful improvement compared to the pre-cycle stage. The combined average BSH+BSB achievement increased from 17% to 46%, with the most notable improvement in the religious-values indicator, from 20% to 60% (BSH+BSB), followed by the independence indicator, which rose from 20% to 50%. These two indicators developed more rapidly because their associated practice activities were individual and routine in nature, such as praying and tidying one's own belongings, making them easier for children to internalize compared to indicators requiring social interaction. In contrast, the cooperation and discipline indicators showed relatively slower improvement, reaching only 35% and 40% (BSH+BSB) respectively, because these two values demand coordination and consistency among children that require a longer practice period.

Table 2. Children's Character-Value Achievement in Group B at Cycle I (% and n; n = 20)

Character-Value Indicator	BB % (n)	MB % (n)	BSH % (n)	BSB % (n)	BSH+BSB (%)
Religious values	10 (2)	30 (6)	45 (9)	15 (3)	60



Character-Value Indicator	BB % (n)	MB % (n)	BSH % (n)	BSB % (n)	BSH+BSB (%)
Independence	15 (3)	35 (7)	35 (7)	15 (3)	50
Discipline	20 (4)	40 (8)	30 (6)	10 (2)	40
Responsibility	20 (4)	35 (7)	35 (7)	10 (2)	45
Cooperation	30 (6)	35 (7)	25 (5)	10 (2)	35

Collaborative reflection between the researcher and the classroom teacher at the end of Cycle I identified three main notes. First, children required a more concrete and directly visible (visual) form of reinforcement, not only verbal encouragement from the teacher. Second, variation in cooperation-practice activities remained limited to free group play, so it had not specifically trained role division and shared responsibility. Third, some children still showed inconsistent discipline on certain days, particularly after the weekend break. This finding is consistent with Batubara, Agustini, and Lubis (2023), who emphasized that improving socio-emotional aspects in early childhood through a given method generally requires more than one action cycle to achieve stable results, because character is the outcome of a layered habituation process rather than an instantaneous change.

Reflection and Revision of Action for Cycle II

Based on the Cycle I reflection, the researcher and classroom teacher formulated three revision strategies for Cycle II. First, teacher modeling was reinforced with an "achievement star" reward symbol affixed to each child's name board whenever consistent character behavior was demonstrated. This strategy drew on the finding of Askia, Arina, and Fitri (2024) that the star-board method effectively improves discipline in Group B children because it provides immediate, easily understood visual feedback for young children, and aligns with Mudayanti and Jumiati (2025), who found that combining habituation with positive reinforcement produces better discipline outcomes than habituation without explicit reinforcement. Second, cooperation-practice activities were expanded through a group mini-project of planting and a rotating clean-up duty for the play area, utilizing the school's natural surroundings as a contextual learning medium, consistent with TK Alam Al Khair's identity as a nature-based institution. Third, the



school sent daily habituation notes to parents through a home-school communication book so that practice conducted at school could be consistently continued at home.

Observation Results of Cycle II

Cycle II implementation continued to follow the same four CAR stages, with emphasis on richer variation of practice activities and strengthened reward reinforcement. Observation results showed a significant and more evenly distributed improvement across all indicators compared to Cycle I. The cooperation indicator, the lowest-achieving indicator in Cycle I, increased sharply from 35% to 75% (BSH+BSB) following implementation of the mini-project and group clean-up-duty activities. The discipline indicator likewise increased from 40% to 80% alongside implementation of the achievement-star reward system. The religious-values and independence indicators continued to increase, reaching 90% and 85% (BSH+BSB) respectively, while the responsibility indicator reached 80%.

Table 3. Children's Character-Value Achievement in Group B at Cycle II (% and n; n = 20)

Character-Value Indicator	BB % (n)	MB % (n)	BSH % (n)	BSB % (n)	BSH+BSB (%)
Religious values	0 (0)	10 (2)	45 (9)	45 (9)	90
Independence	0 (0)	15 (3)	40 (8)	45 (9)	85
Discipline	5 (1)	15 (3)	40 (8)	40 (8)	80
Responsibility	0 (0)	20 (4)	40 (8)	40 (8)	80
Cooperation	5 (1)	20 (4)	35 (7)	40 (8)	75



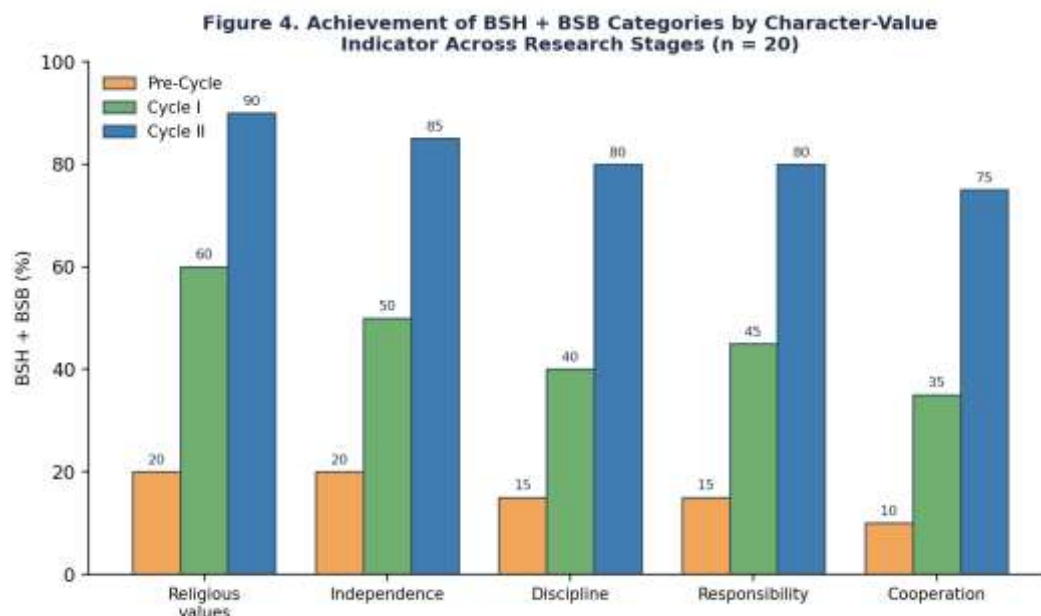


Figure 1. Achievement of BSH+BSB Categories by Character-Value Indicator Across Research Stages (n= 20)

Cross-Stage Recapitulation and N-gain Analysis

To clarify the trend of character-value improvement throughout the study, the mean of the five indicators at each stage, together with the standard deviation (SD), is recapitulated in Table 4.

Table 4. Recapitulation of Mean Character-Value Achievement ($\pm$ SD across the five indicators) at Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II

Stage	BB (%)	MB (%)	BSH (%)	BSB (%)	Mean BSH+BSB (%) $\pm$ SD
Pre-Cycle	45	38	12	5	17.0 $\pm$ 2.74
Cycle I	19	35	34	12	46.0 $\pm$ 9.62
Cycle II	2	16	40	42	82.0 $\pm$ 5.70

Table 4 shows a consistent upward trend in the combined BSH+BSB category, from a mean of 17.0% at pre-cycle to 46.0% at Cycle I and 82.0% at Cycle II. This improvement exceeded the

predetermined success criterion of at least 80% of children reaching the BSH or BSB category, so the classroom action research was declared successful and concluded at Cycle II. The pattern of improvement also shows that the increase from Cycle I to Cycle II (36 percentage points) was larger than the increase from pre-cycle to Cycle I (29 percentage points), indicating that the reinforced strategy in Cycle II - particularly the achievement-star reward system and the group project-based activity variation - produced an accelerating effect on children's internalization of character values. The declining standard deviation across stages (2.74 → 9.62 → 5.70, after an initial widening in Cycle I as indicators progressed at different speeds) further indicates that, by Cycle II, achievement across the five character indicators had become more homogeneous and evenly distributed among children.

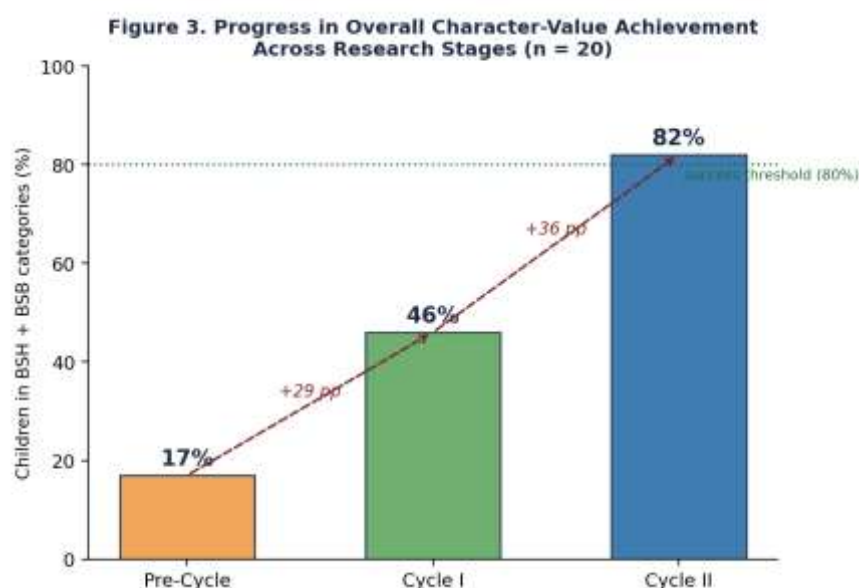


Figure 4. Overall Progress in Combined BSH+BSB Achievement Across Research Stages (n = 20)

To quantify the effectiveness of the practice method more rigorously, the pre-cycle to Cycle II improvement for each indicator was analyzed using the normalized gain (N-gain) formula (Hake, 1998), as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Normalized Gain (N-gain) Analysis of Character-Value Indicators from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II

Character-Value Indicator	Pre-Cycle (%)	Cycle II (%)	N-gain (g)	Effectiveness Category
Religious values	20	90	0.88	High
Independence	20	85	0.81	High
Discipline	15	80	0.76	High
Responsibility	15	80	0.76	High
Cooperation	15	75	0.71	High

As shown in Table 5, all five character-value indicators achieved the high-effectiveness category ($g > 0.70$) according to Hake's (1998) criteria, with religious values showing the largest normalized gain ($g = 0.88$) and cooperation the smallest, though still high ($g = 0.71$). This pattern corroborates the raw-percentage findings above: indicators involving individual, routine practice (religious values, independence) internalized fastest, while indicators requiring social coordination (cooperation, discipline) required the additional reinforcement strategies introduced in Cycle II to reach comparably high effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion elaborates the findings in greater depth for each character-value aspect, followed by a general discussion of data triangulation, alignment with the theoretical framework, comparison with prior research, practical implications, and the limitations of this study.

Religious Values

The increase in the religious-values indicator from 20% at pre-cycle to 90% at Cycle II (N-gain = 0.88, high) represents the highest achievement among the five indicators observed. This can be explained by the fact that religious-practice activities, such as praying before and after activities and expressing gratitude, are routine, brief, and easily repeated daily, allowing children to form habits more quickly than values requiring complex social interaction. This finding is

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consistent with Rukiyati, Siswoyo, and Hendrowibowo (2023), who confirmed that moral-value instillation in early childhood at faith-based institutions is effectively achieved through a combination of modeling, habituation, and positive reinforcement applied repeatedly and consistently by educators. The context of TK Alam Al Khair as an institution grounded in Islamic values further strengthened this achievement, because religious activities were not merely part of the research's practice method but had already become part of the school's daily culture, as reflected in its School Education Unit Curriculum.

Independence

The independence indicator increased from 20% at pre-cycle to 85% at Cycle II (N-gain = 0.81, high), alongside repeated practice such as putting away toys, arranging one's own sandals and bag, and completing simple physical tasks independently as targeted in Group B's Learning Outcome Flow (ATP). Wahyuni and Al Rasyid (2022) found that habituation, emotional intelligence, and parental support significantly influence children's independence, both partially and simultaneously, reinforcing the importance of consistent practice across the school and home environments in this study. In line with this, Lestari and Fathiyah (2023) showed that independence in children aged 5-6 years can be enhanced through learning methods and strategies that are systematically designed and sustained, rather than through momentary instruction alone. The relatively high independence achievement in this study was further supported by the exploratory, nature-based character of TK Alam Al Khair, where children are accustomed to performing physical activities and self-care directly in an open-air environment.

Discipline

The discipline indicator showed a slower rate of improvement in Cycle I (40%) compared to the religious-values and independence indicators, but rose sharply in Cycle II to 80% (N-gain = 0.76, high) following implementation of the achievement-star reward system. This pattern reinforces the finding of Askia, Arina, and Fitri (2024) that the star-board method provides concrete, immediate visual feedback, making it more effective at motivating disciplined behavior in young children than verbal reinforcement alone. Mudayanti and Jumiati (2025) similarly confirmed that discipline in early childhood develops more optimally when habituation is combined with consistent positive reinforcement. The slower discipline improvement in Cycle I relative to other indicators also indicates that discipline is the character value most vulnerable to



inconsistency in children's routines outside school, thereby requiring the additional reinforcement strategy implemented in Cycle II.

Responsibility

The responsibility indicator increased from 15% at pre-cycle to 80% at Cycle II (N-gain = 0.76, high), driven primarily by group clean-up-duty activities and consistent completion of mini-project tasks. Mashudi (2024) affirmed that success in instilling responsibility in children aged 5-6 years strongly depends on a consistent partnership between teachers at school and parents at home, since discontinuity of habituation between the two environments will hinder children's internalization of values. Consistent with this, the present study incorporated a home-school communication book as a routine communication medium between teachers and parents during Cycle II, which appears to have contributed to the accelerated improvement of the responsibility indicator relative to Cycle I.

Cooperation

Cooperation was the indicator with the lowest initial achievement (15% at pre-cycle) yet underwent a very sharp increase in Cycle II, from 35% to 75% (N-gain = 0.71, high), following implementation of the group planting mini-project and rotating clean-up duty. Kartikasari and Muthmainah (2023) explained that early-childhood social skills develop optimally when children are given the opportunity to practice within a structured and repeated group context, rather than only through unstructured free play. This finding also corroborates the studies of Ningsih, Prasetyo, and Hasanah (2022) and Hardiansyah, Rohman, and Deviyanti (2021), which showed that nature-based, natural-material learning-center approaches and garden-based learning provide a rich learning context for stimulating children's cooperation, because children gain direct, meaningful experience compared with purely instructional learning - a relevance that is particularly apt given that TK Alam Al Khair explicitly makes its natural surroundings the school's primary learning resource.

Data Triangulation and Alignment with the Theoretical Framework

The observation results showing consistent improvement across all indicators were corroborated by interview data with the classroom teacher and by photographic/video documentation of activities, which, through triangulation, revealed a coherent pattern: children



increasingly displayed character behavior spontaneously, without needing repeated reminders, by the end of Cycle II. The convergence of these three data sources (observation, interview, documentation) strengthens the validity of this classroom action research's findings. Theoretically, these results reinforce Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that children's moral behavior is formed through modeling, reinforcement, and the consistent repetition of actions within their social environment, and align with Yao and Enright (2022), who emphasized that the development of prosocial behavior in children is strongly influenced by mutually reinforcing family and school environmental factors. The markedly larger improvement in Cycle II compared to Cycle I further indicates that adding a positive-reinforcement element accelerated the internalization of character values, a finding consistent with the principle of operant conditioning within behavioral learning theory.

Comparison with Prior Research

The findings of this study largely reinforce a number of prior studies while also revealing several differences in emphasis. Consistent with Fidesrinur, Fitria, and Lestari (2023), who found that moral learning in children aged 4-6 years requires a continuous variety of methods, this study demonstrates that such variation - from simple practice in Cycle I to project-based practice in Cycle II - contributed significantly to accelerating character achievement, particularly for the cooperation indicator. However, unlike a number of similar studies that emphasize physical-object rewards (Askia, Arina, & Fitri, 2024), this study shows that a simple achievement-star symbol was sufficiently effective without requiring material incentives, making it more feasible for sustained implementation by schools with limited resources. Furthermore, whereas Batubara, Agustini, and Lubis (2023) emphasized the general importance of more than one cycle for achieving stable results in socio-emotional aspects, this study clarifies that, among the five character values observed, cooperation and discipline were the two indicators most in need of an additional cycle, whereas religious values and independence achieved optimal results more quickly owing to their more individual and routine nature.

Practical Implications for TK Alam Al Khair

This study offers several practical implications for TK Alam Al Khair Bandar Lampung. First, the practice method combined with a simple reward system (achievement stars) and group project-based activities proved effective and can be adopted routinely in the school's daily



activities, particularly to strengthen cooperation and discipline, which have been the main challenges. Second, given TK Alam Al Khair's identity as a nature-based institution, character-practice activities should continue to be linked with exploratory activities in the surrounding environment, such as gardening and play-area clean-up duty, so that character-value instillation remains contextual and meaningful. Third, given the importance of school-family synergy demonstrated in this study, the school needs to strengthen routine communication with parents through a home-school communication book or periodic meetings, so that character values practiced at school can be consistently internalized at home, while simultaneously reinforcing the local Lampung cultural values of Piil Pesenggiri and the spirit of togetherness embedded in the school's curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered both in interpreting its results and in planning future research. First, this classroom action research was conducted with a single learning group at a single educational institution, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to other kindergartens with different characteristics. Second, character-value achievement was measured using a categorical, qualitative-descriptive scale (BB, MB, BSH, BSB), which, despite being strengthened through data triangulation, remains susceptible to rater subjectivity; future studies could strengthen inter-rater reliability through the use of multiple independent observers and formal agreement statistics. Third, this study did not specifically control for extraneous variables such as parenting style or children's exposure to digital media, which may have influenced character-value achievement independently of the practice-method intervention delivered at school. Future research is therefore recommended to extend the study to multiple learning groups or institutions simultaneously, and to consider a quasi-experimental quantitative design to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the structured, repeated, and consistent implementation of the practice method improved children's character-education values, particularly in the aspects of religious values, independence, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation, raising combined BSH+BSB achievement from 17% at pre-cycle to 46% in Cycle I and 82% in Cycle II - all five indicators reaching a high N-gain effectiveness category ($g > 0.70$). These results imply that



teachers can adopt the practice method as a character-habituations strategy combined with modeling, positive reinforcement, and contextual, nature-based activities, while continuously involving parents. Future research is recommended to involve more diverse subjects and educational institutions and to employ a stronger research design to broaden the generalizability of these findings.

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