

The Dhuha Prayer Habituation Strategy to Foster Children's Self-Confidence

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received: June 1, 2026 Accepted: July 19, 2026 Available online on: July 31, 2026	Self-confidence is a fundamental aspect of early childhood social-emotional development, enabling children to communicate, interact, and participate actively in learning. However, some children still show low self-confidence, such as hesitating to speak in class, answering questions reluctantly, and depending on teacher assistance. This study aimed to describe the role of congregational Dhuha prayer in enhancing the self-confidence of children aged 5–6 years at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed involving 27 children in Group B. Data were collected through observations across five phases, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings showed that regular participation in congregational Dhuha prayer improved children's self-confidence. The number of children in the Very Well Developed (VWD) category increased from 10 to 15, while the Not Yet Developed (NYD) category declined from four children to none. Children became more confident in leading prayers, answering
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questions, speaking before their peers, and interacting with teachers and classmates. These findings suggest that congregational Dhuha prayer is an effective religious habituation strategy for strengthening young children's self-confidence and social-emotional development.

Introduction

Early childhood is a crucial stage of development because during this period, various aspects of a child's development undergo rapid growth and lay the foundation for development in subsequent stages (Lee et al., 2023). During this time, children possess a wide range of potential that needs to be nurtured through appropriate stimulation from both the family and school environments so that all aspects of their development can flourish optimally (Laela & Aprianti, 2019). These developmental aspects include cognitive abilities, language, physical motor skills, religious and moral values, as well as social-emotional development. Therefore, a conducive and supportive environment is essential to help children achieve optimal development appropriate for their age stage (Munawaroh et al., 2024)

One important social-emotional aspect to develop from an early age is self-confidence. Character education plays a role in helping children develop positive attitudes, independence, responsibility, and confidence in their abilities (Harahap, Zahroh, 2021). According to Lickona (1999a) and Arif et al. (2024), self-confidence is a character trait that needs to be instilled from an early age because it helps children

recognize their potential, express their opinions boldly, and build positive relationships with their surroundings. Children with self-confidence tend to be more active in learning activities, are willing to speak in public, and are able to interact effectively with both teachers and peers (Putri & Suriani, 2024). These findings are supported by research by Niswah & Zulfahmi (2024), which shows that stimulation appropriate to children's characteristics and needs can support social-emotional development, including the ability to interact, take responsibility, demonstrate discipline, and express oneself with confidence.

However, the development of self-confidence in every child does not always proceed optimally. Based on the results of initial observations conducted at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten, it was found that approximately 16 out of 27 children in Group B, aged 5–6 years, still exhibited low levels of self-confidence. This was evident in the children's behavior, as they were hesitant to express their opinions, less active in learning activities, and still required motivation and guidance from teachers when participating in various school activities.

One form of habit-forming practice implemented at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten to help develop children's character is the group *Dhuha* prayer activity. This activity aims not only to instill religious and spiritual values but also serves as a means of fostering positive character traits such as discipline, responsibility, independence, courage, and self-confidence (Azzahra et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2026) explain that a

school's religious culture, when implemented systematically, can help develop noble character traits and children's social-emotional skills. In practice, children are given opportunities to lead prayers, lead recitation sessions, serve as prayer leaders, and actively interact with teachers and peers, thereby gaining social experiences that support character development.

Several previous studies have consistently demonstrated that the habituation of *Dhuha* prayer contributes positively to various aspects of early childhood development, although each study emphasizes different developmental outcomes. Rusdiani et al. (2023), reported that regular *Dhuha* prayer strengthens children's religious character and discipline through continuous religious habituation at school. Similarly, Andriani et al. (2025) found that structured *Dhuha* prayer activities effectively cultivate discipline and responsibility in young children. Sari et al. (2025) further revealed that integrating *Dhuha* prayer with *murojaah* activities enhances children's religious and moral values, while Bismillah et al. (2025) highlighted its broader contribution to character formation through the development of positive behaviors. Likewise, Azzahra et al. (2025) emphasized that consistent *Dhuha* prayer habituation promotes children's moral development and strengthens religious values in early childhood education settings.

Although these studies provide important evidence regarding the educational benefits of *Dhuha* prayer, most of them primarily focus on religious values, discipline, moral development, and general character

formation. Comparatively, limited attention has been given to investigating how congregational *Dhuha* prayer specifically contributes to children's self-confidence, which is one of the essential dimensions of social-emotional development. As a result, empirical evidence explaining the relationship between religious habituation and children's self-confidence remains relatively limited, particularly among children aged 5–6 years in early childhood education settings.

Bandura (1994) explains that individuals develop confidence in their abilities through repeated mastery experiences and meaningful participation in everyday activities. Repeated opportunities to perform tasks independently, interact with others, and experience success gradually strengthen self-confidence. Supporting this perspective, Asiyah (2024) found that children's active involvement in activities requiring them to perform, communicate, and demonstrate their abilities can significantly improve their confidence. In the context of this study, congregational *Dhuha* prayer provides children with repeated opportunities to lead prayers, recite short *surahs*, serve as prayer leaders, and interact with teachers and peers. These experiences may foster not only religious understanding but also children's confidence in expressing themselves and participating actively in social situations.

Unlike previous studies, which generally examined *Dhuha* prayer as a means of strengthening religious character and moral values, this study specifically investigates its role in enhancing children's self-confidence. By focusing on self-confidence as the primary outcome, this

research extends previous findings and offers a broader understanding of how religious habituation contributes to social-emotional development. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on religion-based early childhood education while providing practical insights for teachers in designing learning activities that simultaneously foster religious values and children's self-confidence.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in their natural settings (Sugiyono, 2019; Suriandjo, 2024; Tisdell et al., 2025). The study was conducted at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten, Brondong Subdistrict, Lamongan Regency, East Java, involving 27 children aged 5–6 years in Group B as the research subjects. Participants were selected using purposive sampling because Group B routinely implemented congregational *Dhuha* prayer as part of the school's religious habituation program, making it suitable for achieving the objectives of this study.

The study was conducted over five observation phases carried out sequentially to track the development of children's self-confidence following regular participation in congregational *Dhuha* prayer activities. These phases included initial observation, development observation I, development observation II, final observation I, and final observation II. Each observation was conducted once a week in conjunction with the congregational *Dhuha* prayer activity, which took

place every Saturday before the start of learning activities.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation, which are commonly employed in qualitative research to obtain comprehensive and credible data (Sugiyono, 2019; Suriandjo, 2024). Observations were conducted to monitor the development of children’s self-confidence based on eight indicators, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Indicators of Self-Confidence

No.	Indicators of Self-Confidence
1	Willing to lead prayers
2	Performing prayer movements independently
3	Answering the teacher’s questions
4	Demonstrating self-confidence
5	Willing to speak in front of others
6	Participating in congregational Dhuha prayers
7	Interacting with classmates
8	Communicating with teachers and classmates

Table 1 presents indicators of self-confidence adapted from the concepts proposed by Mishra (2023) and Bhakti (2024), which emphasize children's ability to express opinions, communicate confidently, interact positively with others, and demonstrate independence in everyday activities.

Interviews were conducted with the school principal, Mrs. Artiningseh, S.Pd., and Group B teacher, Mrs. Luluk Indah Rochmawati,

S.Pd., to obtain information regarding the implementation of activities, the role of teachers, supporting factors, obstacles, and the development of children's self-confidence. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of activity photos and records of children's development.

During each observation phase, researchers observed children's participation throughout the congregational *Dhuha* prayer activities using predetermined self-confidence indicators. Observations focused on children's willingness to lead prayers, answer teachers' questions, communicate with peers, participate actively, and perform religious activities independently. Field notes were completed immediately after each observation to ensure data accuracy.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Hasanah & Istiqomah (2023), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process to ensure that the findings accurately represented the observed phenomena. Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Result and Discussions

The congregational *Dhuha* prayer at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten is held regularly every Saturday before classes begin. The activity begins with performing *wudhu* together, forming prayer rows, reciting daily

prayers and reviewing short *surahs*, performing the two-rak'ah *Dhuha* prayer, engaging in *dhikr*, praying together, and concluding with a handshake. This recurring activity serves as one form of religious habit-forming practiced by the school to shape the character of young children. Interviews with the principal revealed that the group *Dhuha* prayer is not only intended to enhance the children's religiosity but also to foster positive character traits such as independence, courage, discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence. Additionally, teachers play a crucial role in providing motivation, accompanying the children throughout the activity, and giving them the opportunity to take turns leading the prayer, reciting the Quran, and serving as the prayer leader. The following is a summary of the interview results with the school principal, Mrs. Artiningseh, S.Pd., and Group B teacher, Mrs. Luluk Indah Rochmawati, S.Pd., as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Interview Results

No	Informant	Key Findings
1	Principal	<i>Dhuha</i> prayer aims to foster religious devotion and positive character in children.
2	Principal	Teachers serve as motivators and mentors.
3	Teacher, Group B	Before the habit-forming process began, there were still 16 children who lacked self-confidence.

4	Group B Teacher	The methods used include habit formation, modeling, and motivation.
5	Group B Teacher	There was an increase in the children's courage, social interaction, and independence.
6	Group B Teacher	The main challenge was the children's shyness, which was addressed through teacher guidance.

Table 2 shows that interviews with the principal and teachers in Group B revealed that some children initially felt shy and lacked confidence when participating in congregational *Dhuha* prayer. Of the 27 children, about 16 still needed encouragement and guidance from teachers to feel confident enough to participate in front of their peers. These findings indicate that teachers play an essential role in facilitating children's self-confidence through continuous guidance and positive reinforcement during religious activities.

This finding is consistent with Asiyah (2024), who reported that children's confidence develops through repeated opportunities to participate actively and demonstrate their abilities. However, unlike Asiyah's study, which focused on classroom-based activities, the present study demonstrates that congregational *Dhuha* prayer also provides meaningful social experiences that foster children's self-confidence. The research documentation was used to corroborate the data from observations and interviews regarding the implementation of

congregational *Dhuha* prayer activities. The following is documentation from the interviews with the school principal and teachers, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Interviews with the principal and teachers

The image on the left in Figure 1 shows an interview with the school principal, Mrs. Artiningseh, S.Pd, and the image on the right shows an interview with Group B teacher Mrs. Luluk Indah Rochmawati, S.Pd. Furthermore, based on other documentation obtained, it is evident that the children enthusiastically participated in the entire series of *Dhuha* prayer activities. Some children were seen taking the initiative to lead prayers, lead the recitation of short *surahs*, and take turns serving as prayer leaders. These activities provided the children with the opportunity to perform in front of their peers, thereby helping to build their courage and boost their self-confidence.



Figure 2. A child leading the congregational *Dhuha* prayer

Figure 2 shows that children not only participate in activities but are also given the opportunity to serve as leaders in religious activities. This opportunity to take the lead directly is one of the factors that supports the development of children’s self-confidence (Maslihah & Rachmi, 2018). The observation results indicate an increase in the development of children’s self-confidence at each stage of observation. In the initial observation, there were 4 children in the observation results indicate a gradual improvement in children's self-confidence across the five observation phases. During the initial observation, four children were categorized as *Not Yet Developed* (NYD), five as *Beginning to Develop* (BD), eight as *Developing as Expected* (DE), and ten as *Very Well Developed* (VWD), as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the observation of children’s self-confidence

Observation Stage	VWD	DE	BD	NYD
Initial Observations	10	8	5	4
Development I	11	10	5	1
Development II	14	10	3	0
Final Observation I	15	10	2	0
Final Observation II	15	11	1	0

Table 3 shows a gradual improvement in children's self-confidence across the five observation phases following regular participation in congregational *Dhuha* prayer. The number of children categorized as Very Well Developed (VWD) increased steadily from 10 during the

initial observation to 15 by Final Observation II. In contrast, the number of children categorized as Not Yet Developed (NYD) decreased from four children in the initial observation to none by Development Observation II and remained at zero until the end of the study. To facilitate the interpretation of these findings, the observation results are presented graphically in Figure 3.

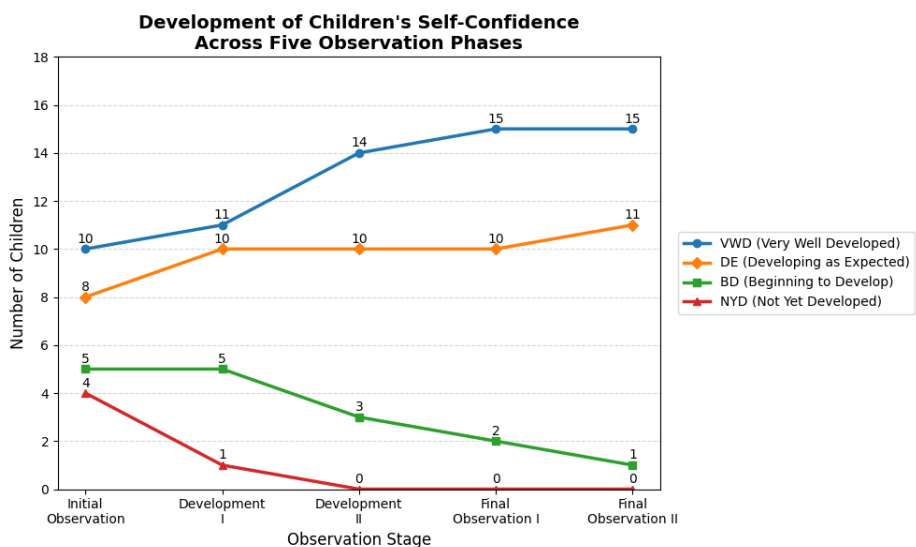


Figure 3. Development of Children's Self-Confidence Across Five Observation Phases

Figure 3 shows a gradual improvement in children's self-confidence across the five observation phases following regular participation in congregational *Dhuha* prayer. The number of children categorized as Very Well Developed (VWD) increased steadily, while the numbers in the Beginning to Develop (BD) and Not Yet Developed (NYD) categories decreased over time. These findings indicate that regular participation

in congregational *Dhuha* prayer was associated with improved children's self-confidence. This improvement was reflected in the children's increasing confidence to answer teachers' questions, speak in front of the class, lead prayers, and interact with teachers and peers. These findings support Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory, which suggests that repeated participation in meaningful activities strengthens children's confidence in their own abilities.

The findings of this study also support the character education theory proposed by Lickona (1999b) which states that character development requires a consistent process of habit formation. Through the practice of congregational *Dhuha* prayer, children not only learn religious values but also gain experiences that foster courage, responsibility, independence, and self-confidence.

In addition to boosting self-confidence, the congregational *Dhuha* prayer activity also helps children develop discipline, responsibility, and commitment to activities performed on a regular basis. The religious experiences gained through these activities also support children's moral and social-emotional development, as they learn to follow rules, interact positively, and actively participate in group activities. These findings align with the research by Rusdiani et al. (2023), which states that the habit of performing *Dhuha* prayer can strengthen religious character, discipline, and positive behavior in young children. Overall, the observation results show an increase in the number of children in the Very Well Developed (VWD) category from 10 children

in the initial observation to 15 children in the final observation, while the Not Yet Developed (NYD) category decreased from 4 children to 0 children. These findings indicate that the practice of congregational *Dhuha* prayer contributes positively to the development of self-confidence in young children. Thus, the results of the study indicate that performing the *Dhuha* prayer in congregation is an effective religious practice for helping to boost the self-confidence of 5–6-year-old children at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that regular participation in congregational *Dhuha* prayer contributed positively to the development of *self-confidence* among children aged 5–6 years at ABA 2 Labuhan Kindergarten. Continuous religious habituation, supported by teachers' guidance and active participation, encouraged children to become more confident, independent, and actively engaged in school activities. These findings suggest that congregational *Dhuha* prayer can serve as an effective religion-based habituation strategy to support young children's *social-emotional development*, particularly in strengthening their self-confidence.

Future research is recommended to employ classroom action research or mixed-methods approaches over a longer observation period to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of *children's self-confidence* development. In addition, future studies may examine the role of parental involvement in reinforcing the habituation of

congregational *Dhuha* prayer at home.

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