

Family–School Collaboration in Fostering Children's

Character Through Religious and Moral Values

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ABSTRACT

The cultivation of moral and religious values in early childhood is a foundational component in fostering holistic character development. This literature study aims to analyze the role of early childhood education teachers, the influence of the family environment, the effectiveness of parent–teacher synergy, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the internalization of moral and religious values. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review, this study synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed academic sources. The results indicate that ECE teachers play a strategic role as role models, facilitators, and motivators through methods such as habituation, storytelling, and value-integrated learning. Concurrently, the family particularly through democratic parenting and consistent religious practices contributes significantly to the moral development of children. The synergy between teachers and parents enhances the consistency of value internalization, especially when supported by collaborative programs, two-way communication, and digital parenting

initiatives. However, challenges such as limited parental understanding, lack of educational resources, and negative digital influences hinder optimal collaboration. These findings underscore the necessity of effective communication, continuous teacher training, and active parental involvement to ensure the successful moral and religious education of young children.

Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) provides a vital foundation for children's personal and social development. It offers opportunities for children to explore, express, and refine their emerging personalities; thus, the provision of diverse, developmentally appropriate activities becomes essential (Novitawati & Anggreani, 2021). Learning experiences designed by teachers—supported by the active engagement of families—play a pivotal role in fostering children's character, particularly through the cultivation of moral and religious values. Moral and religious education in early childhood represents a fundamental element in the formation of sustainable character and personal identity. The early years, spanning from birth to six years of age, are widely recognized as a “golden period” in which children's physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, moral, and spiritual capacities develop optimally (Ghina & Ningsih, 2021). According to UNESCO, ECE serves as a cornerstone of holistic child development, laying the ethical and spiritual foundations that sustain lifelong growth (UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO, 2005). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that

children who receive consistent moral and religious guidance from an early age tend to exhibit honesty, politeness, tolerance, and responsibility in social interactions (Ghina & Ningsih, 2021).

At this developmental stage, education should not be viewed merely as a process of knowledge transmission but rather as a transformative endeavor aimed at instilling enduring ethical and spiritual values (Nurma & Purnama, 2022). Through interactions with both family and educational settings, young children begin to internalize social norms and moral principles, making the integration of home and school efforts essential for effective value education (Wuryandani, 2010; Nurma & Purnama, 2022). In this regard, early childhood teachers serve as value facilitators and guides, while families remain the primary context for experiential learning through modeling and daily practice.

Teachers in early childhood education are not only instructors but also role models, facilitators, and mediators who help children understand and enact moral and religious principles. As educators, they design structured and intentional learning experiences that nurture ethical understanding, empathy, and respect (Astuti, 2023). Moreover, teachers act as motivators who support children's moral reasoning through play-based activities and meaningful interactions (Rahmawati et al., 2025). Given that children spend a considerable portion of their day in educational settings, teachers inevitably become central figures in the development of children's moral and social identities (Irmayanti

& Yakin, 2024).

Nevertheless, the family's influence remains paramount. As the child's first and closest learning environment, the family plays a dominant role in fostering early moral understanding. Parental consistency, exemplary behavior, and effective communication are crucial in forming children's moral and religious foundations (Azizah et al., 2024). Children learn through observation and imitation of adults' behaviors, making the home a powerful setting for value internalization. Early childhood institutions, on the other hand, serve to strengthen and complement the moral guidance initiated within the family. Teachers reinforce these values through collective worship, behavioral routines, and moral storytelling that integrate ethical learning into daily experiences (Ananda, 2017; Anwar & Cholimah, 2023; Nurma & Purnama, 2022). Thus, a synergistic relationship between families and early childhood institutions is essential to ensure consistency and continuity in value education, preventing discrepancies between home and school practices and fostering children's coherent understanding of moral principles (Anwar & Cholimah, 2023; Nurma & Purnama, 2022).

The collaboration between families and early childhood education institutions in fostering moral and religious values has become a central concern in holistic character education discourse. One major challenge lies in maintaining the consistency and effectiveness of both parties' collaboration in the process of value internalization. Recent studies

indicate that, while both families and ECE institutions play crucial roles, disparities often arise in the methods and intensity of moral instruction, affecting children's comprehension and behavior (Rahma & Raihana, 2025). Although methods such as storytelling, habituation, and dialogic interaction employed by teachers have proven effective, sustained outcomes depend heavily on parents' active involvement at home. The family's role in modeling religious practices and cultural values must be continuously reinforced through enjoyable, communicative learning experiences in school settings (Yatni et al., 2025). However, parental time constraints and the pervasive influence of digital media have emerged as significant challenges to maintaining consistent moral education at home.

Despite extensive research on the individual roles of teachers and families, in-depth studies exploring the dynamics of their partnership remain limited. Existing scholarship often focuses on classroom pedagogies or parenting approaches in isolation, without systematically examining how both contexts can collaborate synergistically and sustainably. Furthermore, the influence of social change and digital technology—both as potential enablers and disruptors—has received insufficient scholarly attention. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyze the role of early childhood teachers in fostering children's moral and religious values; (2) describe the family's influence through parenting practices and moral habituation; (3) identify the forms and effectiveness of teacher-parent collaboration in moral education; and (4) explore the

enabling and constraining factors of such partnerships.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using a literature review approach. This approach was selected as it allows for an in-depth exploration of previous research findings, key theoretical frameworks, and early childhood education practices related to moral and religious value education. This method aims to construct a conceptual framework and identify the patterns, roles, and influencing factors that foster the synergy between early childhood educators and family environments in fostering children's character development.

Data sources for this study were drawn from national and international peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, research reports, and policy documents relevant to moral and religious education in early childhood. The literature search was conducted **covering publications from 2018 to 2024** through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC, using keywords including *early childhood character education*, *teachers' roles in moral education in early childhood*, *family influence on children's religious values*, and *parent-teacher partnerships in early childhood education*. Priority was given to scholarly works published in peer-reviewed journals with measurable impact factors to ensure the academic rigor and reliability of the reviewed materials. Resulting in a final selection of 20 articles for in-depth review.

Through this approach, the study does not merely summarize

existing findings but synthesizes and critically reflects upon conceptual and empirical insights that contribute to the advancement of moral and religious value education in early childhood settings. The synthesis generated from the reviewed literature provides a broader understanding of how teacher–family partnerships can be strengthened to create a more coherent and value-oriented educational environment. Ultimately, this review seeks to offer a conceptual contribution that supports the development of evidence-based practices and promotes a more synergistic collaboration between educators and families in nurturing children’s moral and spiritual growth.

Result and Discussions

Based on the literature review and synthesis of previous studies, several key findings illustrate the patterns of collaboration between teachers and families in fostering children’s character during early childhood. The review reveals that character formation through the internalization of moral and religious values is fundamentally a product of strong collaboration between families and early childhood education (ECE) institutions. Four primary themes consistently emerge from the reviewed literature: the role of teachers, the contribution of families through parenting practices, the forms of teacher–parent collaboration, and the enabling and inhibiting factors that influence such partnerships in moral and religious education.

Table 1. *Summary of Reviewed Studies and Key Findings*

No	Researcher(s) and Year	Research Focus	Key Findings
1	Siyami & Zaharuddin (2023)	The role of early childhood teachers as moral models in educational institutions	Teachers serve as moral exemplars by leading collective prayers, group worship, and providing moral guidance to children.
2	Irmayanti & Yakin (2024)	The influence of teachers' moral exemplarity in religious activities on children's behavior	Teachers' participation in prayer and acts of respect directly impacts children's moral behavior.
3	Sahara & Ali (2023)	Effectiveness of value-based and religious storytelling methods	Storytelling with religious and moral themes is more effective than lectures in improving children's moral understanding.
4	Marlina & Patilima (2023)	Enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence in value-based learning	Higher teacher competence enables the natural integration of moral and religious values into early learning activities.
5	Miftakhi & Pramusinto (2023)	The impact of teacher training on moral education	Teachers who participate in structured training are better able to design systematic moral value lessons and assessments.
6	Husnaini (2024)	The influence of democratic parenting on early childhood character	Democratic parenting emphasizing shared responsibility and positive reinforcement

No	Researcher(s) and Year	Research Focus	Key Findings
		development	strengthens children's honesty, discipline, and empathy.
7	Hidayah et al. (2020)	The relationship between parenting style and children's religious values	Democratic parenting is positively correlated with the development of children's religious values.
8	Asri (2018)	Comparison of permissive, authoritarian, and democratic parenting styles	Democratic parenting is the most effective approach for fostering children's moral character compared to other styles.
9	Anwar & Cholimah (2023)	Religious value habituation at home in the digital era	Regular practices such as prayer, worship, and spiritual routines at home strengthen children's moral character amid digital influences.
10	Maulida & Ismawati (2021)	The family's role in moral habituation during distance learning	Parental routines of prayer, politeness, and discipline during remote learning enhanced children's character during the pandemic.
11	Ayu Christy et al. (2024)	Collaboration between teachers and parents in character development	Two-way communication through progress reports and regular meetings enhances the alignment of home and school values.

No	Researcher(s) and Year	Research Focus	Key Findings
12	Qadafi (2019)	Parent–teacher partnerships in children’s moral education	Collaboration between parents and teachers fosters consistency in children’s moral values within the ECE context.
13	Latif et al. (2023)	Digital parenting programs based on collaboration	Digital media supports parental involvement in moral and spiritual activities despite time constraints.
14	F. P. Astuti et al. (2024)	Parental participation in school activities	Parental involvement contributes to the enhancement of children’s emotional and spiritual intelligence.
15	Kurnianto et al. (2024)	The impact of family–ECE partnerships on children’s social development	Active partnerships strengthen children’s social and moral competence in early childhood.
16	Gea & Malelak (2023)	The impact of school–family collaboration on character development	Family participation in school programs improves children’s moral and social values.
17	Fithri et al. (2024)	Supporting factors of moral education	A value-based curriculum and active teacher–parent communication reinforce children’s character formation.
18	Utami (2022)	Teacher–parent communication in character education	Communicative and participatory teachers support the success of

No	Researcher(s) and Year	Research Focus	Key Findings
			moral value education in early childhood.
19	Margaretha (2020)	Challenges of character education in the digital era	The negative influence of digital media poses barriers to children’s moral development.
20	Netri & Mursid (2024)	Barriers to teacher–parent collaboration in moral education	Limited teacher training and parental understanding weaken the effectiveness of children’s character education.

The analysis of prior studies indicates that the character development of young children cannot be separated from the synergistic collaboration between families and ECE institutions. Teachers occupy a central position as moral exemplars and facilitators of values, while families serve as the primary foundation for strengthening value habituation and daily moral practice. Both play complementary roles in the internalization of moral and religious principles.

Within this context, teachers’ roles can be explained through Albert Bandura’s social learning theory, which posits that children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation of significant models. Teachers who exemplify moral and religious behavior—such as praying together, sharing, and speaking courteously—are more likely to be imitated due to their authority and emotional presence in the

school environment. Amsari et al. (2024) affirm that observational learning from educational role models plays a decisive role in fostering children's behavior. Similarly, Wang (2021) demonstrates that consistent and positive modeling enhances the internalization of moral values more effectively. Teachers, therefore, serve as both moral educators and behavioral models whose patience, discipline, and empathy foster children's moral development (Harahap & Savitri, 2022). Integrating center-based learning with family engagement further strengthens character formation, as children experience consistent value messages across home and school contexts, underscoring that teachers' facilitative role is inseparable from family participation as co-educators (Maimunah et al., 2018).

Beyond role modeling, teachers act as facilitators of moral education by integrating values into play-based and thematic learning activities. Moral and religious education should not be reduced to verbal or cognitive instruction; instead, it should be presented contextually and emotionally to make it meaningful for young learners. Storytelling has proven to be an effective strategy for developing moral understanding in early childhood. Through stories rich in ethical content, followed by guided discussions, children learn not only to distinguish between right and wrong but also to express empathy and emulate positive role models. This method helps children grasp the meaning of moral actions within real-life contexts, reinforcing the idea that storytelling serves as an engaging and effective medium for moral

and spiritual education (Jannah et al., 2023). In this sense, teachers bridge abstract values with concrete experiences, thereby deepening children's moral awareness.

The family, on the other hand, is not merely a place where values are taught but also a space where they are lived and emotionally experienced. From a developmental psychology perspective, the family serves as the primary socialization agent that shapes foundational moral values through emotional interactions and daily routines. Democratic parenting offers children opportunities to understand values through participation rather than obedience alone. This parenting style encourages open communication, shared responsibility, and respect for children's perspectives. Irawan et al. (2024) assert that democratic parenting, which balances affection, discipline, and open communication, enables children to internalize moral principles autonomously. Parental emotional involvement plays a vital role in cultivating empathy and moral responsibility from an early age. Children raised in emotionally supportive families with open communication are more likely to internalize moral values intrinsically rather than through external pressure. Empirical studies confirm that democratic parenting correlates significantly with positive moral development among preschool-aged children (Zatihulwani, 2025). Similarly, parental warmth and non-harsh control are associated with stronger moral outcomes, particularly when children demonstrate effective self-regulation (Schütz & Bäker, 2023). Children who grow up

in families characterized by open communication and strong emotional support are more capable of internalizing moral values autonomously, rather than through external pressure.

The integration of home and school environments is crucial to ensure that value education remains consistent and coherent. Effective collaboration between teachers and parents promotes moral continuity and prevents confusion in children's understanding of values. This collaboration can take multiple forms, such as two-way communication, parenting workshops, family training sessions, or the use of digital media for coordination. Open communication and parental participation in school activities foster a sense of shared responsibility and emotional connectedness. Digital platforms—such as online learning portals and educational social media—facilitate real-time feedback and reciprocal reporting between teachers and parents, reinforcing a sense of co-ownership in children's education and ensuring moral consistency across settings (Urbina et al., 2025). Parental responsiveness and balanced parenting that combine emotional support with appropriate expectations further enhance moral internalization (Zuo, 2024). Active collaboration between teachers and parents—grounded in open communication, mutual trust, and shared goals—significantly supports children's emotional development. Through such collaboration, children gain meaningful role models in expressing emotions appropriately, understanding others' feelings, and managing anxiety or anger in healthier and more constructive ways. (Fatimah

Parera & Supriadi, 2025).

However, character formation in the modern era faces new challenges alongside the growing influence of digital media and shifting social values within society. Children's exposure to age-inappropriate content often blurs the boundaries between moral norms and socially acceptable behavior. Today, moral learning no longer occurs solely through interactions with adults in children's immediate surroundings but also within digital spaces filled with globalized values that frequently conflict with local cultural contexts. Consequently, digital literacy has become an integral component of moral education for both teachers and parents. Educators and families must take an active role in guiding media use so that technology serves as a medium for strengthening values rather than a source of moral dissonance. Beyond technological influences, another challenge arises from the limited understanding among some parents regarding the importance of moral education from an early age. Many still perceive character education as the sole responsibility of schools rather than as a collaborative process. In reality, the success of moral and character education depends heavily on parents' emotional involvement and consistent moral modeling in everyday family life. Therefore, teachers must assume the role of *parent educators*—guiding parents through parenting workshops, consultations, and reflective sessions—to help them effectively carry out moral education at home. Furthermore, research indicates that parental warmth, particularly maternal affection, and active involvement

significantly moderate how moral values are understood and internalized during childhood and adolescence. When parental warmth is lacking, communication and moral modeling tend to be less effective, reducing the depth of children's value internalization. Thus, both teachers and parents must enhance their moral and digital literacy to ensure that media use becomes a constructive avenue for cultivating moral understanding rather than undermining it. (Kil et al., 2023). Consequently, both teachers and parents must enhance their moral and digital literacy to guide children in using media wisely and constructively.

From the perspective of contemporary character education, moral development in early childhood should no longer focus solely on the habituation of good behavior but rather on cultivating reflective and empathetic awareness. Children need to be guided to understand *why* an action is considered good, not merely *what* should be done. Simbolon (2024) emphasizes that effective character education involves reflection, internal dialogue, and moral reasoning that strengthen children's moral will. Thus, early childhood education institutions should function not only as sites of value instruction but as social laboratories for nurturing critical and empathetic moral consciousness.

Conceptually, the findings of this review affirm that early childhood moral and religious education succeeds when supported by three interrelated pillars: exemplary modeling, consistent habituation, and sustained collaboration. Modeling provides tangible behavioral

examples; habituation establishes value consistency through daily routines; and collaboration ensures moral continuity between home and school. When these components operate synergistically, moral and religious value internalization transcends external behavior, cultivating children's integrity and spiritual awareness from an early age. Consequently, the collaboration between families and early childhood education institutions represents not merely a technical partnership but a collective moral responsibility to nurture a generation that is ethical, spiritually grounded, and resilient amid global challenges.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this literature review, it can be concluded that the synergy between families and early childhood education (ECE) institutions plays an essential and complementary role in instilling moral and religious values in young children. Early childhood teachers serve as role models, facilitators, motivators, and educators who effectively foster children's character through various methods, including exemplary conduct, value habituation, religious storytelling, and reflective learning activities. Meanwhile, the family—as the child's first and most influential social environment—significantly contributes to the internalization of values through democratic parenting, consistent moral and religious practices, and everyday modeling of ethical behavior. The reviewed studies also highlight that effective partnerships between teachers and parents involve collaborative planning, joint implementation of value-based activities, and

continuous evaluation of children's character development. Such collaboration strengthens the consistency of moral internalization, enhances emotional intelligence, and fosters prosocial behavior from an early age. Nevertheless, challenges persist, including disparities in value understanding between home and school, limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and low levels of parental engagement. Therefore, reinforcing partnerships between families and ECE institutions is crucial for the success of holistic character education in early childhood. This collaborative approach ensures not only the continuity of moral and religious value formation but also establishes the ethical and spiritual foundations that will guide children's lifelong personal and social development.

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