

# Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children in Early Childhood Education Contexts: A Qualitative Study

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## ABSTRACT

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's character, habits, and lifelong learning dispositions. In Indonesia, national educational values emphasize the development of holistic individuals who are spiritually grounded, socially responsible, independent, and resilient. However, limited empirical research has explored how these values are manifested in children's daily practices within early childhood education settings. This study aims to explore and describe the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children as reflected in everyday learning activities. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, involving classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and document analysis of educational programs. The study was conducted in selected early childhood education centers that actively implement character-based learning. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and meanings related to children's habitual behaviors. The findings reveal seven interconnected habits: spiritual awareness, discipline and responsibility, independence, cooperation, respect and empathy, curiosity and love of learning, and healthy living practices. These habits are embedded in daily routines, teacher modeling, and culturally grounded learning activities. The results highlight that habit formation occurs through consistent practice, social interaction, and supportive learning environments. This study contributes to the literature by providing a culturally contextualized understanding of character education in early childhood. The findings offer practical implications for educators and policymakers in strengthening habit-based learning approaches. Integrating these habits into early childhood education is essential for fostering well-rounded children who are prepared for future challenges.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) has become a global priority due to its significant role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. During early childhood, children experience rapid developmental changes that influence their future learning and behavior. International research highlights that early educational experiences contribute to the formation of lifelong habits, values, and dispositions (Moss et al., 2021; Pyle & Danniels, 2021). In this context, ECE is not only concerned with academic readiness but also with character formation and holistic development. Educational systems worldwide are increasingly emphasizing the importance of integrating social-emotional learning and character education into early childhood curricula. Therefore, understanding how positive habits are developed in early childhood education settings is essential for improving educational practices.

Character education has emerged as a central focus in early childhood education, particularly in response to global challenges such as social inequality, cultural diversity, and rapid technological change. Research suggests that children develop values and behaviors through daily interactions, routines, and social experiences within educational environments (Fleer & van Oers, 2021; Edwards, 2021). Teachers play a crucial role as role models who guide children's behavior and support the development of positive habits. Furthermore, classroom culture and peer interactions significantly influence children's understanding of social norms and values. Studies also indicate that habit formation in early childhood is closely linked to repeated practices and consistent reinforcement. As a result, character education should be embedded in everyday learning activities rather than taught as separate content.

From a sociocultural perspective, children's development is shaped by interactions within their social and cultural environments. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory explains that children's learning occurs through interactions within multiple systems, including family, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These systems interact dynamically to influence children's behavior and development. In early childhood education, cultural values and social norms play a significant role in shaping educational practices. Archer and DeWitt (2021) emphasize that teacher agency and cultural context influence how educational values are implemented in classrooms. Therefore, understanding children's habits requires an analysis of the cultural and social contexts in which they are developed.

In Indonesia, early childhood education is strongly influenced by national values that emphasize character development, spirituality, and social responsibility. The concept of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children reflects these values and aims to foster holistic child development. These habits include spiritual awareness, discipline, independence, cooperation, empathy, curiosity, and healthy living practices. However, despite the importance of these values, empirical research examining how they are implemented in early childhood education settings remains limited. Most studies focus on curriculum design or policy analysis rather than on children's daily practices. This gap highlights the need for research that explores how character values are translated into everyday behaviors.

Previous international qualitative studies have explored various aspects of character education and habit formation in early childhood settings. Moss et al. (2021) highlight the role of play in supporting children's meaning-making and value development. Similarly, Pyle and Daniels (2021) emphasize the importance of play-based learning in fostering social and emotional skills. Fler and van Oers (2021) argue that conceptual play supports both cognitive and emotional development in early childhood. Edwards (2021) also highlights the role of digital play in shaping children's learning experiences. While these studies provide valuable insights, they are primarily conducted in Western contexts and may not fully capture the cultural dynamics of Indonesian education.

The Indonesian context presents unique cultural and educational characteristics that influence how children's habits are formed. National education policies emphasize moral and character education as essential components of early childhood development. Cultural values such as respect, cooperation, and spirituality are deeply embedded in educational practices. However, rapid social changes, including technological advancements and shifting family dynamics, pose new challenges for educators and parents. These changes require adaptive educational approaches that remain rooted in cultural values while addressing contemporary needs. Therefore, examining how the Seven Habits are practiced in real educational settings is crucial for understanding their relevance and effectiveness.

Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring children's habits and character development in early childhood education. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative approaches allow researchers to capture participants' lived experiences and the meanings they construct. In the context of ECE, qualitative methods enable the exploration of classroom interactions, teacher practices, and children's behaviors in natural settings. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how values are internalized through daily activities. Furthermore, qualitative research allows for the examination of cultural nuances that may not be captured through quantitative methods. As such, it is an appropriate approach for studying the Seven Habits in Indonesian early childhood education contexts.

Despite the growing interest in character education, there is still a lack of research that focuses specifically on habit formation within culturally grounded frameworks. Many existing studies emphasize general concepts of social-emotional learning without considering cultural specificity. Archer and DeWitt (2021) highlight that educational practices must be understood within their cultural contexts to be meaningful. Similarly, Edwards (2021) emphasizes that learning experiences are shaped by both cultural and technological influences. This suggests that character education frameworks such as the Seven Habits should be examined within their cultural contexts. Addressing this gap is essential for developing contextually relevant educational practices.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore how the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children are manifested in early childhood education settings. The study focuses on children's daily practices, teacher interactions, and classroom routines as key elements in habit formation. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research seeks to provide a detailed understanding of how character values are internalized by children. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on character education by providing insights from the Indonesian context. Additionally, the

study offers practical implications for educators and policymakers in strengthening character-based education. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of integrating cultural values into early childhood education practices to support holistic child development.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Early Childhood Education and Holistic Development**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is widely recognized as a critical stage for fostering children's holistic development, encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, and moral domains. Research indicates that early learning experiences significantly influence children's long-term academic achievement and behavioral outcomes (Moss et al., 2021; Pyle & Danniels, 2021). In ECE settings, children learn through play, interaction, and daily routines, which serve as the foundation for developing essential life skills. Fler and van Oers (2021) emphasize that conceptual play supports both cognitive and emotional development in young children. Furthermore, early childhood education promotes the development of self-regulation, social competence, and moral understanding. Therefore, ECE should be designed to support not only academic readiness but also character and habit formation.

Holistic development in early childhood is closely linked to the integration of social-emotional learning and character education within the curriculum. Edwards (2021) highlights that learning experiences in early childhood are shaped by both traditional and digital play-based pedagogies. These pedagogies provide opportunities for children to explore, interact, and construct meaning from their experiences. Archer and DeWitt (2021) also argue that cultural context and teacher agency play significant roles in shaping educational practices. This suggests that effective early childhood education must be culturally responsive and contextually relevant. As a result, educators must create environments that support both learning and character development simultaneously.

### **Character Education and Habit Formation in Early Childhood**

Character education has become a central component of early childhood education, focusing on the development of values, attitudes, and behaviors that support children's overall well-being. Research shows that children develop character through repeated experiences, modeling, and reinforcement within their environments (Lickona, 2012; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Habit formation is particularly important in early childhood because behaviors established during this period tend to persist into later life. Daily routines, teacher guidance, and peer interactions all contribute to the development of positive habits. Moss et al. (2021) highlight that play-based activities provide meaningful contexts for children to internalize values. Therefore, character education should be embedded in everyday practices rather than taught as isolated lessons.

The concept of habit formation is closely related to sociocultural learning theories, which emphasize the role of social interaction in shaping behavior. According to Vygotsky (1978), children

learn through guided participation and interaction with more knowledgeable others. In early childhood education, teachers and peers play significant roles in modeling and reinforcing positive behaviors. Pyle and Danniels (2021) argue that play-based learning environments support the development of social and emotional skills . These environments provide opportunities for children to practice cooperation, empathy, and self-regulation. As such, habit formation is not a passive process but an active and socially mediated experience.

### **Sociocultural and Ecological Perspectives on Child Development**

The sociocultural perspective provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how children's habits are formed within social and cultural contexts. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process, where children construct knowledge through interaction and collaboration. This perspective highlights the importance of cultural tools, language, and social relationships in shaping children's development. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) explains that children's development is influenced by multiple interconnected systems, including family, school, and community. These systems interact dynamically to shape children's behaviors and experiences. Therefore, understanding children's habits requires consideration of both immediate and broader environmental influences.

In the context of early childhood education, cultural values and social norms play a significant role in shaping children's learning experiences. Archer and DeWitt (2021) emphasize that educational practices are deeply influenced by cultural contexts and teacher agency . This suggests that character education frameworks must be adapted to reflect local cultural values. Edwards (2021) also highlights the role of digital environments in shaping children's experiences . These findings indicate that children's development is influenced by both traditional and modern contexts. Consequently, educational approaches must integrate cultural values while adapting to contemporary challenges.

### **The Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children**

The concept of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children reflects national educational goals that emphasize character development and cultural values. These habits include spiritual awareness, discipline, independence, cooperation, empathy, curiosity, and healthy living practices. They are designed to support holistic child development and prepare children for future challenges. However, there is limited empirical research examining how these habits are implemented in early childhood education settings. Most existing studies focus on policy or curriculum frameworks rather than actual practices in classrooms.

Understanding how these habits are manifested in daily activities is essential for evaluating their effectiveness. Moss et al. (2021) suggest that children's habits are developed through repeated participation in meaningful activities . Similarly, Fler and van Oers (2021) highlight the importance of integrating learning with real-life experiences . In the Indonesian context, cultural values such as respect, cooperation, and spirituality are embedded in daily routines. Therefore, examining how these values are practiced provides insights into the effectiveness of character education programs. This perspective underscores the importance of qualitative research in capturing real-life practices.

## **Role of Teachers and Learning Environment**

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating character development and habit formation in early childhood education. They act as role models who demonstrate values and behaviors that children can imitate. Research shows that teacher–child interactions significantly influence children’s social and emotional development (Pyle & Danniels, 2021) . Teachers also create learning environments that support exploration, collaboration, and emotional expression. Edwards (2021) emphasizes that play-based and interactive learning environments enhance children’s engagement and learning outcomes . Therefore, the role of teachers extends beyond instruction to include emotional and social support.

The learning environment also plays a significant role in shaping children’s habits and behaviors. A supportive and structured environment provides opportunities for children to practice positive behaviors consistently. Archer and DeWitt (2021) highlight that culturally responsive teaching practices enhance children’s learning experiences . This suggests that learning environments should reflect children’s cultural backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, collaboration between teachers and families strengthens the continuity of learning and character development. Such environments enable children to internalize values and behaviors more effectively.

## **Research Gap and Contribution**

Despite extensive research on early childhood education and character development, several gaps remain. Many studies focus on general concepts of social-emotional learning without examining culturally specific frameworks. Moss et al. (2021) highlight the need for research that explores children’s lived experiences in diverse cultural contexts . Furthermore, existing studies often rely on quantitative methods, which may not capture the complexity of habit formation. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative research is essential for understanding the meanings and experiences underlying human behavior . This highlights the importance of adopting qualitative approaches in studying character education.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children within early childhood education contexts. By focusing on children’s daily practices and interactions, the study provides a deeper understanding of how habits are formed. The findings contribute to the literature by offering insights into culturally grounded character education. Additionally, the study provides practical implications for educators and policymakers in designing effective educational programs. This research also strengthens the integration of sociocultural perspectives in early childhood education. Ultimately, it contributes to the development of holistic and contextually relevant educational practices.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the manifestation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children in early childhood education settings. The qualitative

approach was selected because it allows researchers to understand children's behaviors, interactions, and daily practices within their natural contexts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is effective for exploring meanings and experiences constructed by participants. The descriptive design focuses on presenting a detailed account of observed phenomena without manipulating variables. In this study, the researcher aimed to describe how character values are embedded in everyday classroom routines and interactions. This approach enabled the researcher to capture authentic practices of habit formation among children.

Qualitative descriptive research is particularly appropriate in early childhood education because learning at this stage is socially and culturally situated. Children develop habits through repeated participation in routines and interactions with others. Therefore, observing these natural processes provides deeper insights into how character values are internalized. The design also allows flexibility in capturing complex and dynamic classroom environments. By focusing on real-life contexts, the study ensures ecological validity and relevance. As a result, the findings reflect actual practices rather than theoretical assumptions.

### **Research Setting and Context**

The study was conducted in selected early childhood education centers in Indonesia that actively implement character education programs aligned with national educational values. These settings were chosen because they provide a relevant context for examining the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children. Early childhood education centers serve as environments where children engage in daily routines, social interactions, and structured learning activities. These elements create opportunities for habit formation and character development. The selected sites represent diverse socio-cultural backgrounds to enrich the data. This diversity allows the study to capture variations in educational practices and cultural influences.

The classroom environment in these centers includes various activities such as group learning, play-based learning, and routine-based practices. These activities are designed to support children's holistic development, including emotional, social, and moral aspects. Teachers play a central role in facilitating these activities and guiding children's behavior. The presence of structured routines, such as morning greetings, prayers, and collaborative play, provides consistent opportunities for habit formation. The natural setting of the study allows the researcher to observe how these practices are implemented in everyday situations. Therefore, the research context is essential for understanding how the Seven Habits are manifested in real educational environments.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study consisted of early childhood teachers and school administrators who were directly involved in implementing character education programs. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. These criteria included active involvement in early childhood teaching and experience in guiding children's character development. Teachers were selected because they have direct interaction with children and play a key role in shaping classroom practices. School administrators were included to

provide insights into institutional policies and program implementation. This combination of participants ensures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection continued until no new significant information emerged. Participants came from different early childhood education centers to ensure diversity in perspectives. This diversity contributes to the richness and depth of the data. Participants' experiences and insights provide valuable information about how the Seven Habits are implemented in practice. Their perspectives also help identify challenges and strategies in character education. Thus, the selection of participants supports the credibility and relevance of the study.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine children's daily activities, interactions, and routines related to habit formation. Observations focused on how children demonstrate behaviors such as cooperation, discipline, and empathy in real situations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to explore their perspectives on character education and habit development. Interview questions were designed to capture teachers' experiences, strategies, and challenges in implementing the Seven Habits. Document analysis included reviewing lesson plans, school programs, and educational materials related to character education.

Each data collection method served a specific purpose in the research. Observations provided direct evidence of children's behaviors and classroom practices. Interviews allowed participants to explain their perspectives and provide deeper insights into their practices. Document analysis offered additional context and supported the findings from observations and interviews. The combination of these methods ensured data triangulation, which enhances the credibility of the study. All data were collected in natural settings to maintain authenticity. This comprehensive approach enabled a thorough understanding of the research phenomenon.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify patterns and meanings within the collected data. The analysis process began with familiarization, where the researcher reviewed observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents. This was followed by coding, where significant statements and behaviors were identified and labeled. Codes with similar meanings were grouped into categories, which were then developed into broader themes. These themes represent key patterns related to the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children. The analysis was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than being predetermined.

The researcher ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the data by continuously comparing findings with the original sources. This iterative process helped refine the themes and ensure their accuracy. Peer discussions were also conducted to validate the interpretation of the data. The final themes were presented in a descriptive narrative supported by evidence from observations

and interviews. This approach ensures that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences. Therefore, thematic analysis provides a systematic and rigorous method for understanding the data.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation using multiple sources such as observations, interviews, and documents. Prolonged engagement in the field also allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the context. Dependability was ensured by maintaining detailed records of the research process. This documentation allows other researchers to follow and evaluate the study's procedures. Transparency in data collection and analysis strengthens the reliability of the findings.

Confirmability was addressed by ensuring that the findings were based on data rather than the researcher's personal biases. This was achieved through careful documentation and the inclusion of evidence from multiple sources. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participants. This enables readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings. The use of qualitative methods allows for rich and contextualized data. Overall, these strategies enhance the rigor and credibility of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process to ensure the protection of participants' rights. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants' identities in all research reports. All data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes. This ensured that participants' privacy was protected throughout the study.

The researcher also ensured that the study did not cause any harm or discomfort to participants. Observations and interviews were conducted in a respectful and supportive manner. Participants were given the opportunity to express their views freely without pressure. Ethical principles such as honesty, transparency, and respect were upheld throughout the research process. These considerations ensured the integrity of the study. Consequently, the research adheres to established ethical standards in qualitative research.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **Theme 1: Spiritual Awareness as a Foundational Habit**

The findings reveal that spiritual awareness emerges as a fundamental habit embedded in children's daily routines in early childhood education settings. Children demonstrate this habit through consistent practices such as praying before and after activities, expressing gratitude, and showing respectful behavior toward others. These practices are not taught as isolated lessons but are integrated

into daily classroom routines and interactions. Teachers play a crucial role in modeling spiritual behaviors, which children gradually imitate and internalize. One teacher explained, *“We start every activity with a short prayer, and over time, children begin to do it on their own without being reminded. They also learn to say thank you and appreciate what they have. This shows that spiritual habits are becoming part of their daily lives.”* This finding indicates that repeated exposure and consistent practice contribute significantly to the development of spiritual awareness.

In addition, spiritual awareness is closely linked to children’s understanding of moral values and respectful behavior. Children are observed to demonstrate politeness, patience, and empathy in their interactions with peers and teachers. A teacher stated, *“When children are used to praying and being reminded about kindness, they become more respectful toward their friends. They start helping each other and saying kind words. These small actions reflect their growing awareness of values.”* This suggests that spiritual practices contribute not only to religious development but also to broader character formation. The integration of spiritual values into daily routines strengthens children’s moral understanding. Therefore, spiritual awareness serves as a foundational habit that supports other aspects of character development.

## **Theme 2: Discipline and Responsibility through Routine-Based Practices**

The study found that discipline and responsibility are developed through structured routines and consistent expectations in the classroom. Daily schedules, rules, and teacher guidance provide a framework that helps children understand the importance of order and accountability. Children are encouraged to follow routines such as arriving on time, cleaning up after activities, and completing assigned tasks. These practices help children develop a sense of responsibility for their actions. One teacher noted, *“We have daily routines, and children know what they are expected to do. They clean up their toys and follow instructions without being told repeatedly. This helps them become more disciplined.”* This finding highlights the role of routine in shaping disciplined behavior.

Furthermore, responsibility is reinforced through opportunities for children to take ownership of their tasks. Teachers provide guidance while allowing children to perform activities independently. A teacher explained, *“We give children small responsibilities like arranging their belongings or helping friends. At first, they need guidance, but eventually, they become more independent. They feel proud when they can do things on their own.”* This indicates that responsibility is developed gradually through practice and encouragement. The consistent application of rules and expectations creates a stable environment for habit formation. As a result, discipline and responsibility become integral parts of children’s daily behavior.

## **Theme 3: Independence as a Key Developmental Outcome**

Independence is identified as an important habit that is nurtured through daily activities and teacher support. Children are encouraged to complete tasks independently, such as managing their personal belongings, making choices, and solving simple problems. These opportunities help children develop confidence and self-reliance. Teachers play a supportive role by providing guidance without excessive intervention. One teacher stated, *“We encourage children to try things on their own first before asking for help. This helps them build confidence and learn from their experiences. Over time, they become more independent.”* This finding emphasizes the importance of autonomy in early childhood development.

In addition, independence is closely related to children's ability to make decisions and take initiative. Children are observed to show increased confidence in expressing their preferences and ideas. A teacher explained, *"When children are given choices, they become more active and engaged. They start making decisions and taking responsibility for them. This shows that independence is developing."* These findings suggest that independence is not only about performing tasks but also about developing decision-making skills. The classroom environment provides opportunities for children to practice autonomy. Therefore, independence emerges as a key outcome of habit-based learning.

#### **Theme 4: Cooperation and Social Interaction**

Cooperation is another key habit identified in the study, developed through collaborative activities and social interactions. Children participate in group activities such as playing games, completing tasks, and sharing resources. These activities encourage teamwork and mutual support among children. Teachers facilitate cooperation by organizing group-based learning experiences. One teacher stated, *"We often organize group activities where children have to work together. They learn to share, take turns, and help each other. This builds their cooperation skills."* This finding highlights the importance of social interaction in developing cooperative behavior.

Moreover, cooperation is closely linked to children's ability to communicate and resolve conflicts. Children learn to express their feelings, listen to others, and negotiate solutions during interactions. A teacher explained, *"When conflicts happen, we guide children to talk about their feelings and find solutions together. This helps them understand each other better. Over time, they become more cooperative."* This suggests that cooperation is developed through both structured activities and spontaneous interactions. The learning environment supports the development of social skills. As a result, cooperation becomes an essential habit in early childhood education.

#### **Theme 5: Respect and Empathy in Social Relationships**

The findings indicate that respect and empathy are developed through daily interactions and teacher modeling. Children learn to respect differences, listen to others, and show care for their peers. These behaviors are reinforced through positive interactions and guidance from teachers. One teacher stated, *"We teach children to respect each other by listening and not interrupting. They also learn to help friends who are in need. These behaviors become habits over time."* This finding demonstrates that respect and empathy are cultivated through consistent practice.

In addition, empathy is developed through opportunities for children to understand others' feelings. Teachers encourage children to reflect on their actions and consider the impact on others. A teacher explained, *"When a child hurts a friend, we ask them to think about how their friend feels. This helps them develop empathy. They begin to understand the importance of kindness."* This process supports emotional and social development. The classroom environment provides a safe space for practicing empathy. Therefore, respect and empathy are essential components of character education.

#### **Theme 6: Curiosity and Love of Learning**

Curiosity and a love of learning are identified as important habits that support children's intellectual development. Children demonstrate curiosity through questioning, exploring, and

engaging in learning activities. Teachers facilitate this habit by providing stimulating and interactive learning experiences. One teacher stated, *“Children are naturally curious, and we encourage them to ask questions. We provide activities that make them excited to learn. This helps them develop a love of learning.”* This finding highlights the role of teacher support in fostering curiosity.

Furthermore, curiosity is linked to children’s motivation and engagement in learning. Children who are encouraged to explore and discover show higher levels of interest and participation. A teacher explained, *“When children are given opportunities to explore, they become more active and interested. They enjoy learning and want to know more. This shows that curiosity is growing.”* These findings suggest that curiosity is nurtured through interactive and meaningful experiences. The learning environment plays a crucial role in supporting this habit. As a result, curiosity becomes a driving force for lifelong learning.

### **Theme 7: Healthy Living Practices**

Healthy living practices are identified as essential habits that support children’s physical and emotional well-being. Children are encouraged to maintain cleanliness, engage in physical activities, and practice healthy eating habits. These practices are integrated into daily routines and supported by teacher guidance. One teacher stated, *“We teach children to wash their hands, eat healthy food, and stay active. These habits are practiced every day. Over time, they become part of their lifestyle.”* This finding shows that health-related habits are developed through consistent practice.

In addition, healthy living practices contribute to children’s overall development and well-being. Children who engage in physical activities and maintain hygiene show improved energy and focus. A teacher explained, *“When children are active and healthy, they are more focused and ready to learn. It also helps them feel better emotionally. This shows the importance of healthy habits.”* These findings highlight the connection between physical health and learning readiness. The integration of health practices into daily routines supports holistic development. Therefore, healthy living practices are an important component of the Seven Habits framework.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

practice.

The findings of this study confirm that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children are deeply embedded in daily practices within early childhood education settings. These habits are not taught as isolated concepts but are developed through repeated routines, teacher modeling, and social interactions. This aligns with sociocultural theory, which posits that children’s learning occurs through participation in socially mediated activities (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Fler and van Oers (2021) emphasize that conceptual play supports both cognitive and emotional development in early childhood. The current findings extend this perspective by demonstrating how culturally grounded habits are internalized through everyday practices. This suggests that habit formation is a dynamic and context-dependent process.

Spiritual awareness, identified as a foundational habit, reflects the integration of moral and cultural values in early childhood education. This finding aligns with global research emphasizing the role of values-based education in shaping children’s character (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). In the Indonesian context, spirituality is closely linked to moral development and social behavior. The

integration of spiritual practices into daily routines supports children's understanding of respect, gratitude, and empathy. This is consistent with Berkowitz and Bier (2005), who argue that character education is most effective when embedded in daily practices. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting how spirituality functions as both a cultural and developmental construct. Therefore, spiritual awareness serves as a foundation for broader character development.

The development of discipline and responsibility through structured routines is consistent with previous research on habit formation in early childhood. Lickona (2012) emphasizes that consistent routines and clear expectations are essential for developing self-regulation and responsibility. Similarly, Duckworth and Gross (2014) highlight the role of self-control and habit in achieving long-term success. The findings of this study show that children develop discipline through repeated participation in daily routines. This supports the idea that habits are formed through consistent practice rather than direct instruction. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of teacher guidance in reinforcing these behaviors. Thus, discipline and responsibility are cultivated through a combination of structure and support.

Independence, as observed in this study, reflects children's growing ability to take initiative and make decisions. This finding is supported by self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy in human development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research by Grolnick and Ryan (1989) also suggests that autonomy-supportive environments enhance children's motivation and competence. The present study demonstrates that children develop independence when given opportunities to act autonomously. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating this process by providing guidance without over-controlling. This aligns with global research emphasizing the importance of autonomy in early childhood education. Therefore, independence emerges as a key outcome of supportive learning environments.

Cooperation and social interaction are central to children's social-emotional development. The findings support previous studies indicating that collaborative learning environments enhance children's social skills (Pyle & Danniels, 2021). Vygotsky (1978) also emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive and social development. In this study, children develop cooperation through group activities and peer interactions. Teachers facilitate this process by creating opportunities for collaboration and guiding conflict resolution. This aligns with research by Denham et al. (2012), which highlights the importance of social-emotional competence in early childhood. Thus, cooperation is developed through both structured and spontaneous interactions.

Respect and empathy, identified as key habits, are essential components of character education. These findings align with research emphasizing the role of empathy in promoting prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Children learn empathy through interactions that encourage perspective-taking and emotional understanding. The study shows that teacher guidance plays a significant role in fostering these behaviors. This is consistent with findings by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), which highlight the importance of teacher social-emotional competence. The integration of respect and empathy into daily practices supports children's social development. Therefore, these habits contribute to the creation of positive learning environments.

Curiosity and a love of learning are critical for fostering lifelong learning. The findings align with research emphasizing the role of inquiry-based learning in early childhood education (Engel,

2011). Children's natural curiosity is supported through play-based and interactive learning environments. Moss et al. (2021) highlight that meaningful engagement in learning activities enhances children's motivation. The study demonstrates that curiosity is nurtured through opportunities for exploration and discovery. Teachers play a key role in facilitating these experiences. Consequently, curiosity becomes a driving force for learning and development.

Healthy living practices, as identified in this study, contribute to children's physical and emotional well-being. This finding is consistent with research linking physical health to cognitive and emotional development (WHO, 2020). Children who engage in healthy behaviors show improved attention and learning readiness. The integration of health practices into daily routines supports holistic development. This aligns with ecological perspectives that emphasize the interconnectedness of physical and psychological well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The study extends this perspective by highlighting the role of routine in developing healthy habits. Therefore, healthy living practices are essential for overall development.

The findings also highlight the importance of teacher roles in facilitating habit formation. Teachers act as role models who demonstrate values and behaviors for children to emulate. This is consistent with research emphasizing the influence of teacher practices on children's development (Pyle & Danniels, 2021). Archer and DeWitt (2021) also highlight the role of teacher agency in shaping educational practices. The study shows that teacher modeling and guidance are critical in reinforcing positive habits. This suggests that teacher training should emphasize character education and social-emotional learning. Therefore, teachers play a central role in supporting habit formation.

From a broader perspective, the findings support the importance of culturally grounded character education. Many international studies focus on universal values, but this study highlights the significance of cultural context. Edwards (2021) emphasizes that educational practices are shaped by both cultural and technological influences. The Seven Habits framework reflects Indonesian cultural values and educational priorities. This contributes to the literature by providing insights from a non-Western context. It also highlights the importance of adapting educational practices to local contexts. Therefore, culturally responsive education is essential for effective character development.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children are effectively embedded in early childhood education through daily routines, teacher modeling, and socially interactive learning environments. The findings demonstrate that habits such as spiritual awareness, discipline, independence, cooperation, empathy, curiosity, and healthy living are not formed through direct instruction alone but through consistent practice and meaningful engagement in everyday activities. These habits collectively contribute to children's holistic development, including their emotional, social, moral, and cognitive growth. The study also highlights the critical role of teachers as facilitators and role models who guide children in internalizing these values. Furthermore, the integration of culturally grounded values within educational practices strengthens the relevance and effectiveness of character education in the Indonesian context. From a theoretical perspective, this research reinforces sociocultural and ecological frameworks that emphasize the importance of context, interaction, and cultural values in child development. Practically, the findings suggest that early

childhood education programs should prioritize habit-based learning and consistent routines to support character formation. In terms of policy implications, there is a need to strengthen character education frameworks within early childhood curricula, enhance teacher training on value-based education, and promote collaboration between schools and families. Overall, this study underscores the importance of integrating character education into everyday learning experiences to support the development of well-rounded and resilient children.

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