

MANAGING TAWHID-BASED EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND INTERNALIZATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract: Tawhid-based education is fundamental to the development of children's religious understanding, moral orientation, and everyday behavior during early childhood. However, rapid social transformation and changing educational environments require Islamic early childhood institutions to develop management strategies that ensure the meaningful and sustainable internalization of tawhid values. This study aims to examine how tawhid-based education is managed through institutional transformation and internalization strategies at RA Miftahul Ulum, Sukorambi, Jember, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews with the head of the institution, vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students, complemented by observations and institutional documentation. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification, followed by content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive analysis. The findings indicate that tawhid-based education is embedded in the daily educational environment through institutional leadership, curriculum integration, teacher modeling, habituation, religious routines, and teacher-student interactions. Teachers function as key agents in translating abstract tawhid principles into concrete and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The study demonstrates that tawhid internalization is strengthened when institutional policies, curriculum, teacher practices, school culture, and children's experiences operate coherently. The study contributes to Islamic education management by positioning institutional transformation as a strategic mechanism for sustaining tawhid-based education beyond formal religious instruction.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Managing, Tawhid, Institutional Transformation, Internalization Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents a critical developmental period in which children begin to construct fundamental understandings of God, morality, social relationships, and patterns of everyday behavior. Within Islamic education, tawhid provides a foundational worldview through which children can

understand Allah as the Creator and develop religiously grounded attitudes and practices. Consequently, the internalization of tawhid values should not be understood merely as the transmission of theological knowledge, but as a process of embedding faith into children's everyday experiences. Recent studies indicate that Islamic early childhood education increasingly faces challenges associated with digital exposure, changing family practices, and shifting patterns of children's interaction with their social environment. Digitalization, for example, provides opportunities for religious learning while simultaneously creating risks that require pedagogical guidance and parental mediation (Muthohar et al., 2026a). These conditions make the management of tawhid-based education increasingly important because the sustainability of religious formation depends not only on classroom instruction but also on institutional culture, teacher modeling, habituation, leadership, and school-family collaboration. Thus, investigating how Islamic early childhood institutions manage tawhid-based education is socially and educationally significant.

Previous studies have examined the internalization of Islamic and religious values in early childhood through several perspectives, including teacher role modeling, daily habituation, religious activities, curriculum integration, parental involvement, and digital learning. Research on tawhid internalization has demonstrated that teachers function as spiritual educators, moral exemplars, and mediators between school and family, particularly when children encounter modern cultural influences (Raniyah, 2024). Other research has specifically examined tawhid-based educational management and found that curriculum integration, ritual activities, teacher-parent collaboration, and spiritual assessment can support the internalization of Islamic creed among young children (Ain et al., 2025). Recent research has also investigated Islamic education management for strengthening children's character and identified habituation, teacher role modeling, school culture, and home-school reinforcement as important organizational mechanisms (Munawaroh et al., 2026). However, these studies have not sufficiently explained how institutional transformation itself

becomes a strategic mechanism for managing tawhid-based education amid changing childhood contexts. The existing literature tends to emphasize pedagogical strategies or specific religious programs rather than examining how leadership, curriculum management, organizational culture, teacher development, and family engagement are collectively transformed into an integrated institutional strategy. This gap provides the basis for the present study.

This study investigates Managing Tawhid-Based Education in Early Childhood, Institutional Transformation and Internalization Strategies by examining RA Miftahul Ulum as a case of Islamic early childhood education. The study considers the perspectives of the head of RA, teachers, educational managers, and parents, supported by observations and institutional documentation. This multidimensional approach is important because previous research indicates that religious-value formation emerges through interactions among educational practices, institutional culture, teachers, families, and children's everyday experiences (Munawaroh et al., 2026). Accordingly, the study conceptualizes tawhid internalization as an institutional process involving planning, implementation, habituation, modeling, coordination, evaluation, and continuous collaboration between school and family.

The study argues that sustainable tawhid internalization in early childhood is more likely to occur when tawhid-based education is managed as an integrated institutional system rather than as an isolated religious-learning activity. This proposition suggests that institutional transformation becomes meaningful when Islamic values are embedded across leadership practices, curriculum planning, teacher development, daily routines, organizational culture, learning environments, and family engagement. Recent evidence from Islamic preschools demonstrates that religious-value formation becomes more coherent when habituation, teacher exemplarity, school culture, and home-school reinforcement operate simultaneously, while weaknesses in planning, coordination, and evaluation can constrain program continuity (Munawaroh et al., 2026). Similarly, research on Qur'an-based early childhood education shows that institutional

management can be directed toward strengthening children's understanding and internalization of Islamic values as a response to contemporary character challenges (Hasbullah & Sanusi, 2023). Therefore, this study proposes that institutional transformation can function as a strategic bridge between contemporary educational challenges and sustainable tawhid internalization. The expected implication is a contextually grounded model of Islamic education management in which tawhid becomes not merely a curricular content but a shared institutional orientation manifested through leadership, pedagogy, culture, and family participation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted at RA Miftahul Ulum, Sukorambi, Jember, East Java, Indonesia, which serves as the material object and research setting for examining the management of tawhid-based education in early childhood. The selection of this institution was purposive because RA Miftahul Ulum provides an appropriate context for investigating how Islamic educational values, particularly tawhid, are managed and internalized within an early childhood institution. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of institutional practices, experiences, and strategies related to tawhid-based education. A case study was considered appropriate because the research focuses on a contemporary educational phenomenon within its real-life institutional context. The study specifically examined institutional management, curriculum implementation, teacher practices, habituation activities, and the development of an educational environment that supports the internalization of tawhid values. Rather than measuring predetermined variables, the qualitative design enabled the researchers to explore meanings, practices, interactions, and institutional processes from the perspectives of participants within their natural educational setting.

The sources of information were selected purposively based on their direct involvement and knowledge of tawhid-based educational practices at RA

Miftahul Ulum. The informants consisted of the head of the school, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students. The head of the school provided information concerning institutional policies, leadership, educational planning, and the management orientation of tawhid-based education. The vice principal for curriculum affairs contributed information regarding curriculum planning, integration of tawhid values into learning activities, and curriculum implementation. Teachers provided insights into classroom practices, habituation, role modeling, religious activities, and strategies used to facilitate children's internalization of tawhid values. Students were included to obtain perspectives and observational evidence concerning how tawhid values were experienced and expressed in daily educational activities. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on learning activities, religious routines, teacher–student interactions, habituation, and the school environment. Interviews explored participants experiences and interpretations, while documentation included curriculum materials, institutional programs, schedules, and relevant educational records.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through three principal stages are data reduction, data display, and data verification, following the interactive model of qualitative data analysis developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Data reduction involved selecting, coding, categorizing, and organizing information relevant to institutional transformation, management practices, and tawhid internalization. The reduced data were subsequently displayed in thematic matrices and descriptive categories to identify patterns, relationships, similarities, and differences across information sources. Data verification involved continuously examining emerging interpretations, comparing evidence across participants and data-collection techniques, and drawing conclusions based on the consistency of the findings. To deepen the interpretation, three complementary analytical methods were employed are content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive analysis. Content analysis was used to identify recurring themes and meanings in interview transcripts and institutional documents. Discourse analysis

examined how participants articulated tawhid, educational management, institutional change, and religious values within the institutional context. Interpretive analysis was then applied to understand the meanings underlying observed practices and participant experiences. Triangulation across informants, observations, interviews, and documents was used to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The management of tawhid-based education at RA Miftahul Ulum is organized through several interconnected institutional and pedagogical practices. The information obtained from the head of the school, vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers, and students indicates that tawhid is not positioned merely as a specific religious-learning topic but is incorporated into daily educational activities. The interview data can be summarized in Table 1 to facilitate interpretation of the institutional strategies identified from the participants.

Table 1. The management of tawhid-based education at RA Miftahul Ulum

Informant	Main Information	Tawhid-Based Management Practice	Internalization Strategy
Head of School	Institutional direction and religious orientation	Establishing tawhid as a foundation of educational programs	Leadership, habituation, institutional culture
Vice Principal for Curriculum	Curriculum planning and implementation	Integrating Islamic values into learning themes and activities	Curriculum integration and contextual learning
Teachers	Classroom and daily practices	Prayer, religious routines, storytelling, modeling, and habituation	Teacher exemplarity, repetition, interaction
Students	Experiences in learning activities	Participating in religious routines and	Practice, imitation, habituation

		demonstrating learned values	
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The table demonstrates that tawhid internalization is managed through a multi-level process involving institutional leadership, curriculum management, teachers, and children's participation.

The interview data indicate a recurring pattern in which tawhid-based education is implemented through the integration of institutional policy, curriculum, teacher practices, and daily habituation. The head of the school represents the managerial level by providing institutional direction, while the vice principal for curriculum translates this orientation into learning planning and implementation. Teachers subsequently transform these institutional expectations into concrete experiences through prayer routines, religious storytelling, moral examples, and everyday interactions with children. Meanwhile, students occupy an important position as recipients and participants in the process because internalization becomes visible through their participation in repeated religious activities and their responses to teacher modeling. This pattern suggests that tawhid internalization is not produced by a single educational intervention. Rather, it emerges through consistency between what the institution plans, what teachers practice, and what children repeatedly experience. Analytically, this finding indicates that institutional management functions as a mediating mechanism between Islamic educational principles and children's lived religious experiences. The stronger the alignment among leadership, curriculum, teacher behavior, and habituation, the greater the possibility that tawhid values will become embedded within children's everyday practices.

Tawhid-based education is embedded in the daily educational environment of RA Miftahul Ulum through systematic habituation, teacher modeling, and the integration of tawhid values into children's learning experiences. Rather than appearing exclusively during formal religious lessons, the internalization process can be observed through routines, interactions, classroom activities, and the

general educational atmosphere. The observed activities can be organized into several dimensions are religious habituation, teacher modeling, learning integration, children's participation, and environmental reinforcement. In religious habituation, activities such as prayer, greetings, expressions of gratitude, and other Islamic routines provide repeated opportunities for children to encounter and practice religious values. In classroom learning, Islamic meanings can be connected with themes familiar to children, such as recognizing Allah as the Creator, appreciating nature, demonstrating kindness, and showing responsibility. Teacher-child interactions provide another important dimension because teachers demonstrate religious and moral behavior directly through their speech, attitudes, and responses to children. These observations indicate that tawhid-based education operates through an experiential environment in which children learn through seeing, hearing, imitating, repeating, and participating in meaningful activities.

A prominent pattern emerging from the observations is the dominance of habituation and modeling as mechanisms of tawhid internalization. Children encounter religious values repeatedly through structured routines and spontaneous interactions, while teachers function as visible models of the values being taught. This pattern can be interpreted through the developmental characteristics of early childhood, in which children tend to learn abstract values more effectively when those values are represented through concrete experiences and repeated social interactions. Tawhid, as a theological concept, may be difficult for young children to understand when presented only through verbal explanation. Therefore, the institution appears to translate the abstract principle of belief in Allah into concrete behaviors, routines, language, and relationships that children can observe and practice. The observation findings consequently strengthen the interpretation that internalization occurs through a movement from knowing to experiencing and from experiencing to habituating. This also demonstrates the importance of institutional consistency, when the school environment repeatedly communicates the same religious orientation, children

receive reinforcement from multiple sources rather than encountering tawhid as an isolated classroom concept. The observed practices therefore reflect an adaptive strategy for making Islamic theological values developmentally meaningful.

Besides that, the documentation findings provide supporting evidence concerning the institutionalization of tawhid-based education at RA Miftahul Ulum. Relevant documents should be understood as evidence of how the institution formally plans, organizes, and records its educational practices. Based on the documents available for analysis, the evidence can be grouped into several categories, including curriculum and learning plans, institutional programs, daily activity schedules, religious activity records, and other educational documents related to children's development. The documentation can be visualized as follows:

Table 2. The Documentation of Tawhid-Based Education at RA Miftahul Ulum

Documentary Evidence	Information Represented	Relevance to Tawhid-Based Education
Curriculum/Learning Plans	Learning objectives and activities	Integration of Islamic and tawhid values
Institutional Programs	Planned religious and educational activities	Institutional commitment to value formation
Daily Schedules	Routine educational and religious activities	Habituation and continuity
Activity Records	Implementation of religious practices	Evidence of repeated value-based activities
Assessment/Development Records	Children's development and participation	Monitoring of internalization-related behaviors

These documents demonstrate that tawhid-based education can be positioned not only as an informal practice but also as part of the institution's organized educational system.

The documentation shows a pattern of institutional consistency, particularly when planned educational activities, daily routines, religious programs, and developmental monitoring reinforce similar value orientations. This pattern is analytically important because it indicates that tawhid internalization is supported by formal and informal mechanisms operating simultaneously. Curriculum documents establish the educational direction, institutional programs provide structured opportunities for implementation, daily schedules create continuity, and assessment or developmental records provide a basis for monitoring children's progress. When these elements are aligned, tawhid-based education becomes embedded within the organizational structure rather than depending entirely on individual teachers' initiatives. The documentary evidence therefore complements the interview and observation findings by demonstrating the institutional dimension of the process. Taken together, the three sources suggest that managing tawhid-based education involves a continuous relationship between institutional planning, pedagogical implementation, and children's everyday experiences. The findings further imply that institutional transformation does not necessarily require abandoning established Islamic educational traditions; instead, transformation occurs through reorganizing and strengthening existing religious practices so that they remain meaningful within contemporary early childhood contexts. Thus, the management of tawhid-based education can be interpreted as an ongoing process of institutional alignment between Islamic values, educational practices, and the developmental needs of young children.

Discussion

The most important implication of managing tawhid-based education at RA Miftahul Ulum is the emergence of institutional coherence between leadership, curriculum, teachers, and children's learning experiences. Tawhid internalization becomes an organizational responsibility rather than an activity delegated exclusively to religious teachers. The head of the institution provides direction, curriculum management translates Islamic principles into educational planning,

and teachers transform those principles into daily pedagogical experiences. This finding is consistent with Elyana and Das (2022), who demonstrate that Islamic education management can be embedded in early childhood curriculum construction and daily learning practices. Recent research further shows that Islamic early childhood education requires organizational mechanisms that sustain religious values across everyday character-building practices (Munawaroh et al., 2026), while organizational culture can influence the creation of supportive early childhood learning environments (Supriyono et al., 2024).

Research on Islamic educational leadership also emphasizes the importance of adaptive leadership in transforming religious values from symbolic commitments into organizational behavior (Abidin et al., 2026). Similarly, Azimah et al. (2025) identify participatory leadership and Islamic work culture as important managerial dimensions in improving RA quality. Therefore, the functional implication of the interview findings is institutional coherence, tawhid becomes a shared organizational orientation. The potential dysfunction, however, occurs when institutional policies are not consistently translated into teachers' everyday practices.

The underlying reason for this institutional pattern is the structural relationship between organizational direction, curriculum, teacher enactment, and children's repeated experiences. Tawhid is an abstract theological concept, whereas young children encounter meaning primarily through concrete interaction, imitation, repetition, and emotionally meaningful experiences. Consequently, institutional management provides the structure through which abstract religious principles are translated into accessible educational practices. Elyana and Das (2022) demonstrate that Islamic values become sustainable when incorporated into curriculum construction and everyday learning rather than isolated as additional content. Munawaroh et al. (2026) similarly identify planning, implementation, organizational culture, and evaluation as organizational mechanisms supporting religious-value continuity in Islamic preschools.

Mata-McMahon et al. (2025) show that early childhood educators conceptualize spirituality not only as an internal essence but also through actions and relationships, reinforcing the importance of observable practice. Law-Davis (2023) further demonstrates that teachers' confidence and contextual conditions influence how religious education is actually taught. Abidin et al. (Abidin et al., 2026) argue that adaptive leadership is necessary when religious culture must be constructed through everyday organizational behavior. The underlying structure can therefore be interpreted as institutional mediation as leadership establishes orientation, curriculum structures opportunities, teachers embody the values, and children encounter them repeatedly. Thus, the interview evidence suggests that institutional transformation becomes meaningful when management successfully converts theological principles into developmentally appropriate educational experiences.

Implication by demonstrating that tawhid-based education is embedded in the daily educational environment of RA Miftahul Ulum through habituation, teacher modeling, religious routines, learning interactions, and children's participation. The implication is that internalization takes place through children's lived experiences rather than through formal religious instruction alone.

Jumiatmoko (2026) emphasizes teacher modeling and moral internalization as important pedagogical responses to children's everyday social interactions. Mata-McMahon et al. (2025) further show that children's spirituality is expressed through actions, relationships, virtues, and meaning-making, rather than solely through formal religious knowledge. Muthohar et al. (2026) demonstrate that guided, multisensory experiences can support children's religious identity formation when teachers intentionally mediate learning. Therefore, the functional outcome of the observed practices is the transformation of tawhid from curricular content into a lived school culture. Nevertheless, habituation may become dysfunctional if repeated practices become mechanical and detached from children's understanding. The observation therefore indicates that repetition

needs to be accompanied by meaningful explanation, modeling, interaction, and emotional engagement.

The interaction between developmental characteristics, teacher behavior, institutional routines, and social learning. Young children generally construct meanings through direct experiences with significant adults, repeated routines, imitation, and participation. Thus, the consistent presence of religious practices within the school environment creates a structured context in which tawhid values can be encountered repeatedly. The mechanism is not simply repetition itself but the combination of repetition and social meaning. Jumi atmoko (2026) illustrates how teachers' responses to children's conflicts can become opportunities for moral internalization through modeling.

Mata-McMahon et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that spirituality in early childhood is connected to relationships and practices through which children construct meaning. Muthohar et al. (2026) extend this argument by showing that teacher-guided multisensory experiences can mediate religious identity formation in contemporary digital contexts. Ramadani et al. (Ramadani et al., 2025) also emphasize that Islamic early childhood institutions face challenges in integrating contemporary media into religious learning. The underlying structure is therefore relational and ecological, institutional routines provide continuity, teachers provide models, interactions provide meaning, and children provide active participation. The observation evidence consequently indicates that tawhid internalization is produced through repeated social experiences supported by institutional structure.

The teacher-strategy evidence has an important because teachers function as the operational bridge between institutional transformation and children's internalization of tawhid. The strategies represented in the findings are teacher modeling, habituation, storytelling, religious routines, contextual learning, interpersonal guidance, and integration of Islamic values, show that teachers do not merely transmit knowledge but translate institutional values into children's everyday experiences. This interpretation is supported by Law-Davis (Law-Davis,

2023), who demonstrates that teachers confidence and contextual influences shape the teaching of religious education. Mata-McMahon et al. (2025) emphasize that educators understanding of children's spirituality includes action, relationships, and the practice of virtues.

Jumiatmoko (2026) demonstrates that teacher modeling can become a mechanism for moral internalization when educators respond intentionally to children's social experiences. Polem and Ridha (2025) highlight teacher collaboration in establishing consistent religious habits, while Muthohar et al. (2026) similarly demonstrate that teachers' guided mediation determines whether digital experiences become meaningful religious learning or merely passive screen exposure. The functional implication is therefore teacher-mediated internalization are institutional values become tangible through teachers behavior, language, pedagogical decisions, and relationships with children. The potential dysfunction lies in excessive dependence on individual teachers. If institutional support is weak, the continuity of tawhid-based practices may vary according to individual commitment. Consequently, teacher strategies need to be supported by institutional systems, shared standards, professional development, and collaborative culture.

The teacher-strategy findings is the structural relationship between institutional support, teacher exemplarity, pedagogical consistency, and children's everyday religious experiences. Teachers occupy a strategic position between formal institutional policy and children's immediate social worlds. When curriculum objectives, leadership expectations, school culture, teacher behavior, and family reinforcement communicate compatible values, children receive coherent messages across different contexts. Conversely, inconsistency among these elements can weaken the continuity of internalization

Supriyono et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of organizational culture in constructing supportive early childhood environments, and Subasman (2023) demonstrates that school culture and progressive leadership influence educational innovation in Islamic schools. At the family level, Aziz (Aziz, 2024)

argues that Islamic value internalization in the digital era requires adaptation to changing environments, while Rahiem and Marhamah (2025) show that parents attach importance to habituation and moral formation in Islamic education for young children. Muthohar et al. (Muthohar et al., 2026b) further demonstrate that parental involvement and teacher mediation are important in managing contemporary religious learning. These findings suggest an underlying institutional-relational structure in which teacher strategies are effective when embedded within organizational and family support. Thus, the central implication of the study is that managing tawhid-based education requires institutional transformation that aligns leadership, curriculum, teacher practice, school culture, and family engagement into a coherent system of religious internalization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that managing tawhid-based education at RA Miftahul Ulum is not limited to the delivery of religious knowledge but represents an integrated institutional process involving leadership, curriculum management, teacher practices, habituation, school culture, and children's everyday learning experiences. The findings indicate that tawhid values are internalized more meaningfully when they are consistently embedded in institutional policies, learning activities, teacher modeling, religious routines, and interactions between teachers and students. Teachers play a particularly important role as operational agents who translate abstract theological principles into concrete and developmentally appropriate experiences that children can observe, practice, and gradually internalize. The study contributes to Islamic education management by extending the understanding of tawhid-based education from a primarily pedagogical concept toward an institutional transformation perspective, in which leadership, curriculum, organizational culture, and teacher practices operate as interconnected mechanisms for value internalization. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its focus on a single Islamic early childhood institution and its

qualitative case-study design, which restricts broader generalization and does not measure the long-term development of children's religious internalization. Future studies should therefore employ comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs across multiple Islamic early childhood institutions to examine the sustainability, transferability, and long-term outcomes of institutional strategies for tawhid internalization.

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