

Teachers' Strategies in Internalizing Awareness of Dzuhur Prayer Worship.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines teachers' strategies in internalizing students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer worship within the context of Islamic Religious Education. The study is based on the assumption that religious practice in schools should not only emphasize behavioural compliance but also develop students' understanding, personal commitment, and spiritual awareness. A qualitative case study approach was employed to explore how teachers plan, implement, and evaluate strategies for strengthening students' prayer awareness. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving Islamic Religious Education teachers, school leaders, and students. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns related to teacher practices and students' religious development. The findings reveal five main strategies: teacher exemplarity, structured habituation, meaning-oriented religious instruction, supportive supervision, and collective involvement. These strategies contribute to a gradual transformation from externally controlled participation toward autonomous and meaningful worship practices. The study highlights that effective prayer internalization requires integration between consistent teacher modelling, school religious culture, reflective learning, and cooperation among school stakeholders. This research contributes to Islamic Religious Education studies by proposing an integrated framework for understanding how teachers transform Dhuhr prayer from a compulsory school activity into a personally meaningful religious commitment.



Introduction

Prayer is a central form of worship in Islam and an essential expression of a Muslim's relationship with Allah. It does not only represent ritual obedience, but also develops spiritual awareness, self control, discipline, responsibility, and moral conduct. Among the five daily prayers, Dhuhr prayer has a distinctive educational position because its prescribed time generally coincides with school hours. Schools therefore have a direct opportunity to help students understand, experience, and consistently perform Dhuhr prayer. This opportunity places teachers in a strategic position because they do not only

explain the religious rules of prayer, but also create conditions in which students learn to value and perform it consciously.

Islamic Religious Education aims to connect religious knowledge with spiritual experience and everyday conduct. It should not stop at the transmission of doctrines, legal rules, and ritual procedures. It should help students understand the meaning of worship and develop a personal commitment to Islamic values. A spirituality-based Islamic education framework can strengthen students' awareness of their relationship with God, their moral responsibilities, and the meaning of religious practices in daily life (Chanifah, Hanafi, Mahfud, & Samsudin, 2021). Recent scholarship also argues that Islamic Religious Education should create space for students to engage with existential questions and experience religion as a meaningful tradition rather than as a collection of facts that must be memorised (Putkonen, Poulter, & Kallioniemi, 2025).

This perspective has important implications for the teaching of prayer. Students may know the number of prayer units, recitations, conditions, and procedures without developing a strong willingness to pray. Cognitive mastery does not automatically produce spiritual awareness or consistent religious behaviour. Religious education must therefore connect knowledge, emotional engagement, personal meaning, and repeated action. In the context of this study, awareness of Dhuhr prayer refers to students' understanding of its religious importance, their affective acceptance of the obligation, their willingness to perform it, and their consistency in praying without depending entirely on teachers' commands.

The need to connect religious knowledge with practice has become more urgent because students receive religious information from multiple sources. Teachers and textbooks no longer function as the only sources of Islamic knowledge. Indonesian secondary school students increasingly use websites, social media, videos, and other digital resources to learn about Islam. Although digital media can broaden access to religious information, students still require critical guidance to assess the reliability, relevance, and meaning of that information (Ju'subaidi, Mujahidin, Abdullah, & Rofiq, 2025). Teachers therefore need strategies that help students connect religious information with reflective understanding and responsible practice rather than merely consuming fragmented religious content.

Religious formation also takes place within diverse family and social environments. Students may come from families that maintain regular congregational prayer, families that emphasise religious knowledge but provide limited supervision, or families with different patterns of religious practice. Research on Muslim religious formation shows that parents hold varied understandings of religious education, everyday religiosity, identity, and the purposes of Islamic instruction (Kolb, 2023). This diversity means that teachers cannot assume that all students enter school with the same prayer habits, motivation, knowledge, or family support. Schools need flexible strategies that recognise students' different starting points while maintaining clear religious and educational objectives.

Teachers play an important role in bridging differences between students' religious backgrounds and the expected religious culture of the school. Empirical evidence from Malaysian secondary schools indicates that teachers and the school environment are significantly related to students' Islamic moral practices (Tamuri & Ismail, 2021). Teachers influence religious behaviour through instruction, communication, supervision, expectations, interpersonal relationships, and personal example. A supportive school environment strengthens this influence by providing shared norms, facilities, schedules, and collective religious activities that make religious values visible in students' daily lives (Tamuri & Ismail, 2021).

The teacher's personal example is particularly important in the internalisation of worship. Students observe whether teachers prepare for prayer, stop their activities when the prayer time begins, join congregational prayer, maintain proper conduct, and treat worship as a meaningful obligation. Teachers who consistently demonstrate religious commitment provide students with concrete models of how Islamic values operate in real situations. Research on religious character development shows that exemplary leadership and consistent modelling can strengthen religious values among educators and other members of educational institutions (Indawati, Kartiko, Suyitno, Sirojuddin, & Fuad, 2022). Teacher modelling therefore communicates values through visible behaviour and not only through verbal instruction.

However, modelling alone may not be sufficient. Students also need repeated opportunities to perform religious practices in a stable and supportive setting. Habituation is widely used in Islamic education because repeated actions can develop behavioural consistency and strengthen students' familiarity with religious routines. Research on Islamic character education found that systematic habituation can move students through the stages of moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action (Ma'arif, Muqorrobin, Kartiko, Sirojuddin, & Rofiq, 2024). Islamic habituation that includes daily prayer, gratitude, respectful interaction, and other religious practices can support moral behaviour and participation in school religious activities (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024).

In Dhuhr prayer programmes, habituation may include a fixed prayer schedule, reminders before the call to prayer, organised ablution, class-to-mosque transitions, congregational prayer, attendance monitoring, and post-prayer activities. These practices create structure and reduce practical barriers to participation. Yet repetition does not necessarily indicate that students have internalised the value of prayer. Students may participate because they fear sanctions, want attendance points, follow their friends, or seek teachers' approval. Such participation reflects external compliance rather than a personally accepted religious commitment.

The distinction between compliance and internalisation is therefore critical. Internalisation occurs when students gradually accept a value as personally meaningful and integrate it into their self-regulation. Self-Determination Theory explains that behaviour differs according to the quality of motivation behind it. Externally regulated behaviour depends on rewards, punishment, or direct pressure, while autonomous motivation emerges when individuals understand and personally accept the value of an activity (Guay, 2022). In education, teachers can promote internalisation by explaining the rationale for expected behaviour, acknowledging students' perspectives, providing appropriate choices, building competence, and creating supportive relationships (Guay, 2022).

Large-scale educational evidence supports this argument. A meta-analysis involving more than 79,000 students found that teacher autonomy support strongly contributes to students' psychological need satisfaction and self-determined motivation (Bureau et al., 2022). Students develop stronger autonomous motivation when teachers support their sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This does not mean that teachers should remove rules or allow students to decide whether religious obligations are important. It means that teachers should combine clear expectations with explanations, respectful dialogue, meaningful participation, and emotional support (Bureau, Howard, Chong, & Guay, 2022).

Recent meta-analytic findings further show that autonomy support and instructional structure are not competing approaches. Effective teaching combines both. Students benefit when teachers establish clear routines, expectations, guidance, and feedback while also helping them understand the value of the expected behaviour (Patzak

& Zhang, 2025). Applied to Dhuhr prayer, teachers need to provide a structured system that ensures time, facilities, supervision, and order. At the same time, they need to explain why prayer matters, invite reflection, address students' difficulties, and encourage personal responsibility. Excessive control may generate temporary obedience, while structure without spiritual meaning may turn prayer into a mechanical school routine.

Reflective communication can prevent habituation from becoming mechanical. Teachers can discuss the spiritual purpose of prayer, its relationship with gratitude and accountability, the meaning of recitations, and the challenges students face in maintaining prayer. Teachers may also use short reflections, stories, mentoring, individual conversations, and classroom discussions to connect prayer with students' experiences. Research on the internalisation of religious maturity highlights the importance of guidance, personal warnings, inspirational religious stories, value oriented worship, self-recognition, and the ability to distinguish good from harmful conduct (Hasanah et al., 2022). These approaches show that religious internalisation requires continuous mentoring and evaluation rather than one-directional instruction (Hasanah, Basalamah, & Farida, 2022).

Peer relationships and collective practices also shape students' prayer behaviour. Congregational Dhuhr prayer creates a social environment in which students see worship as a shared responsibility. Positive peer norms can encourage punctuality, participation, and mutual reminders. Negative peer norms may produce avoidance, joking, lateness, or resistance. Teachers therefore need to manage peer influence by involving student leaders, assigning rotating responsibilities, establishing mentoring groups, and creating a respectful prayer atmosphere. This strategy can transform congregational prayer from a compulsory school activity into a shared religious culture.

The internalisation of prayer may also contribute to broader aspects of adolescent development. A study of adolescents in Aceh found that the acceptance of vertical and horizontal Islamic moral values was significantly related to adolescent behaviour (Nuriman et al., 2024). Longitudinal research involving Indonesian Muslim adolescents also showed that religiosity and positive religious coping were associated with lower externalising behaviour and reduced loneliness (French, Purwono, & Shen, 2022). These findings do not mean that prayer alone automatically produces positive behaviour. They indicate that meaningful religious involvement can become one part of the psychological, moral, and social resources that support adolescent development.

A broader systematic review and meta-analysis found that spiritual well-being may offer protection against depressive symptoms among young people, although the effects vary across contexts and the quality of available studies remains uneven (Aggarwal, Wright, Morgan, Patton, & Reavley, 2023). This evidence suggests that religious practices need to be approached carefully. Schools should avoid making exaggerated claims that ritual participation directly solves students' psychological or behavioural problems. They should instead recognise that meaningful spiritual practices can support self-reflection, belonging, emotional stability, and positive coping when implemented through sensitive and educationally sound approaches (Aggarwal et al., 2023).

Previous studies have produced valuable knowledge about Islamic character education, religious habituation, school culture, teacher exemplarity, spirituality-based learning, and students' moral behaviour. However, several gaps remain. First, many studies discuss religious character in broad terms and combine prayer, Qur'an reading, charity, politeness, discipline, and other practices as one category. Such studies provide limited explanations of how teachers address the distinctive challenges of one obligatory act of worship. Second, much research measures student participation or describes school programmes without distinguishing external compliance from genuine awareness. Third, existing research often presents habituation as the main strategy but gives limited attention

to how modelling, reflective dialogue, motivational support, peer engagement, monitoring, and family communication interact. Fourth, few studies specifically examine Dhuhr prayer as a religious practice located within the temporal, spatial, and organisational structure of the school day.

This study offers novelty by focusing specifically on teachers' strategies for internalising awareness of Dhuhr prayer rather than examining religious character or prayer habituation in general. The study views awareness as a multidimensional process that includes religious knowledge, spiritual meaning, emotional acceptance, autonomous motivation, and consistent practice. This perspective allows the research to distinguish students who pray because of direct supervision from students who gradually develop personal responsibility for worship.

The study also proposes an integrated understanding of teacher strategy. It examines the relationship among teacher modelling, structured habituation, meaningful explanation, reflective dialogue, motivational support, peer involvement, supervision, evaluation, and cooperation with families. These components are studied as a connected pedagogical process rather than as separate school activities. Such an approach can explain not only what teachers do, but also how and why their strategies encourage or fail to encourage students' internalisation.

Another unique contribution concerns the educational position of Dhuhr prayer. Because Dhuhr occurs during school hours, its implementation reveals the interaction between spiritual goals and practical school conditions. Student awareness may depend on timetable management, the availability of prayer and ablution facilities, teacher consistency, peer culture, school leadership, and the quality of communication about worship. Research on Islamic educational leadership emphasises that educational practices in Muslim institutions need to be aligned with Islamic values and supported by context-sensitive leadership (Alazmi & Bush, 2024). Teachers' strategies can therefore be understood properly only when the wider organisational environment is also considered.

This research is important for theoretical, practical, and institutional reasons. Theoretically, it connects Islamic religious education, value internalisation, habituation, teacher exemplarity, and autonomous motivation. It expands the study of prayer from ritual implementation to the process through which students understand, accept, and regulate their worship. Practically, the findings can help teachers select strategies that move beyond reminders, attendance lists, rewards, and sanctions. Teachers may use the findings to combine firm routines with spiritual explanation, individual mentoring, reflective learning, and gradual student responsibility.

Institutionally, the findings can support schools in evaluating whether their Dhuhr prayer programmes produce meaningful religious development or only visible compliance. School leaders can use the results to improve schedules, prayer facilities, teacher coordination, student mentoring, and communication with parents. This evaluation is necessary because sustainable religious culture depends on consistency among school policies, teachers' behaviour, learning processes, social relationships, and students' personal experiences.

Based on these considerations, the study aims to analyse the strategies used by teachers to internalise students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer, investigate how these strategies are implemented in daily school life, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the internalisation process. It also examines how teachers balance structure, supervision, habituation, meaning-making, and student autonomy. Through this focus, the study is expected to produce a contextual model of Dhuhr prayer internalisation that can strengthen the quality of Islamic Religious Education and school-based worship programmes.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a single-case study design to investigate teachers' strategies for internalizing students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer within the natural context of school life. A case study design is appropriate because it allows the researchers to examine a contemporary educational practice in depth while considering the interaction between teacher actions, student responses, school culture, facilities, policies, and daily worship routines (Mtisi, 2022). The unit of analysis is the process through which teachers plan, implement, supervise, and evaluate strategies for developing students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer. Participants are selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the school prayer programme. They are expected to include three Islamic Religious Education teachers, one principal or vice-principal, one religious programme coordinator, and approximately ten to twelve students from different grade levels. The final number of participants will depend on data saturation, which occurs when additional interviews no longer provide meaningful new information. Empirical evidence indicates that saturation in studies with relatively homogeneous participants and narrowly defined objectives often occurs within nine to seventeen interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Data are collected through semi-structured interviews, direct non-participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews with teachers focus on lesson planning, religious explanations, teacher modelling, habituation, prayer reminders, congregational prayer management, student motivation, supervision, sanctions, rewards, reflective activities, evaluation, and cooperation with parents. Interviews with school leaders explore institutional policies, teacher coordination, prayer facilities, scheduling, and programme evaluation, while student interviews examine their experiences, motivations, difficulties, and perceptions of the teachers' strategies. Observations are conducted before, during, and after the Dhuhr prayer. The researchers observe teacher reminders, students' preparation for ablution, punctuality, movement to the prayer area, congregational prayer practices, teacher participation, student discipline, peer interaction, and post-prayer reflection. Documents include prayer attendance lists, school regulations, religious activity schedules, teacher evaluation records, photographs of activities, and programme reports. The combination of interviews, observations, and documents enables methodological triangulation and provides a more complete account of the phenomenon than reliance on a single source of evidence (Schlunegger, Zumstein-Shaha, & Palm, 2024). All participants provide informed consent, while students participate with parental or guardian consent, and their identities are protected through pseudonyms.

The data are analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis involves repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes, initial coding, identification of patterns, development of preliminary themes, review of themes against the complete dataset, definition and naming of themes, and preparation of the analytical report. Reflexive thematic analysis is suitable because it enables researchers to interpret patterns of meaning across participants' experiences while acknowledging the researcher's active role in the analytical process (Byrne, 2022). The initial codes may include teacher exemplarity, structured habituation, spiritual explanation, persuasive communication, supervision, peer involvement, reward and discipline, reflective practice, family cooperation, student resistance, and institutional support. These codes are then organised into broader themes that explain how teachers move students from externally controlled participation toward conscious and personally meaningful Dhuhr prayer observance.

Results and Discussion

The analysis identified five interrelated strategies used by teachers to internalize students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer: teacher exemplarity, structured habituation, meaning-oriented religious instruction, supportive supervision, and collective involvement. These strategies did not operate separately. Teachers combined them within the school's daily religious programme. The findings also revealed three levels of student response: externally controlled compliance, emerging personal awareness, and self-regulated prayer observance.

Table 1. Main Findings on Teachers' Strategies for Internalizing Dhuhr Prayer Awareness

Main theme	Forms of implementation	Observed student response	Meaning of the finding
Teacher exemplarity	Teachers stopped teaching, prepared for ablution, attended congregational prayer, and maintained prayer discipline	Students followed teachers whom they perceived as consistent	Religious values became visible through teachers' behaviour
Structured habituation	Fixed schedules, reminders, class coordination, ablution arrangements, attendance monitoring, and congregational prayer	Students became more punctual and familiar with the prayer routine	Repetition developed behavioural regularity
Meaning-oriented instruction	Explanation of prayer obligations, spiritual meaning, discipline, gratitude, and accountability	Students began to explain personal reasons for praying	Religious knowledge developed into personal understanding
Supportive supervision	Persuasive reminders, personal guidance, recognition, corrective measures, and reflection	Students responded better to guidance than to public punishment	A supportive approach encouraged voluntary participation
Collective involvement	Peer reminders, student prayer coordinators, school leadership support, and communication with families	Students developed shared responsibility for the programme	Prayer awareness was strengthened through a supportive social environment

1. Teacher Exemplarity as the Starting Point of Internalization

The first finding showed that teacher exemplarity became the most immediate strategy for strengthening students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer. Teachers did not only instruct students to pray. They stopped academic activities when the prayer time began, prepared themselves for ablution, moved to the prayer area, joined the congregation, and maintained respectful conduct throughout the activity. Students were more responsive to teachers who consistently participated in the prayer programme than to teachers who only issued instructions.

Teachers' actions gave students a concrete representation of the religious values taught in the classroom. Students could observe that Dhuhr prayer was not merely a school rule for learners but an obligation practised by all members of the Muslim school community. The consistency between teachers' words and actions strengthened the credibility of religious instruction. In contrast, inconsistent teacher participation weakened

the moral force of reminders because students viewed the programme as an administrative requirement rather than a shared act of worship.

This finding confirms that Islamic value internalization requires teachers to demonstrate the behaviour expected from students. The influence of teachers on students' Islamic moral practices is strengthened when their instruction, personal example, and the religious environment of the school support one another (Tamuri & Ismail, 2021). Islamic educational leadership also requires school actors to integrate religious principles into visible educational practices rather than limiting Islamic values to formal statements and curriculum documents (Alazmi & Bush, 2024). Teacher exemplarity functioned as a form of value communication. It showed punctuality, responsibility, humility, cleanliness, congregational commitment, and respect for worship. The students did not only learn how to perform prayer. They learned how a Muslim should respond when the prayer time begins. This result indicates that internalization starts when students encounter consistent models whose conduct reflects the values being taught.

2. Structured Habituation and the Development of Prayer Discipline

The second finding concerned the use of structured habituation. The school established a fixed Dhuhr prayer schedule and coordinated students' movement from classrooms to the prayer area. Teachers delivered reminders before the prayer time, organised ablution, monitored attendance, arranged prayer rows, and assigned students to assist with the call to prayer and congregational preparation. These arrangements reduced delays and created a predictable worship routine.

Repeated participation improved students' practical readiness. Students became more familiar with ablution procedures, mosque etiquette, congregational prayer, and the division of responsibilities. They also required fewer direct instructions after participating in the programme regularly. Students who initially waited for strict teacher commands gradually prepared for prayer when they heard the call to prayer or observed their classmates moving toward the prayer area.

These findings support previous research showing that religious habituation can connect moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action when schools implement it consistently (Ma'arif et al., 2024). Habituation allows religious values to enter students' daily experience through repeated actions instead of remaining abstract concepts. A religious routine can therefore strengthen discipline when teachers provide clear schedules, consistent expectations, and opportunities for students to practise worship directly (Ma'arif et al., 2024).

However, the findings also showed that habituation did not always produce genuine awareness. Some students attended prayer because teachers checked attendance, imposed corrective measures, or stood near classroom doors. Their participation declined when supervision became less intensive. This pattern demonstrates the difference between behavioural regularity and value internalization. Repetition can establish a habit, but it does not automatically ensure that students understand and personally accept the religious meaning of the practice.

The finding extends previous studies by showing that habituation should not serve as the final objective. It should function as an initial structure through which students experience regular worship. Teachers must then connect the routine with reflection, understanding, emotional engagement, and personal responsibility. Without this connection, congregational Dhuhr prayer may become a mechanical school programme.

3. Meaning-Oriented Instruction and Reflective Religious Dialogue

The third finding revealed that teachers strengthened prayer awareness by explaining the meaning and purpose of Dhuhr prayer. They connected prayer with obedience to Allah, gratitude, time discipline, self-control, spiritual tranquillity, personal responsibility, and ethical behaviour. Teachers also discussed practical difficulties, including laziness, embarrassment, lack of preparation, peer influence, and limited prayer habits at home.

This strategy helped students move beyond procedural knowledge. Students generally understood the number of prayer units, prayer recitations, and technical requirements. However, not all students initially understood why they should maintain prayer without direct supervision. Teachers therefore used classroom discussions, short religious messages, individual conversations, stories, and post-prayer reflections to help students interpret prayer as a personal spiritual need.

Religious education becomes more meaningful when it provides opportunities for students to explore the existential and personal dimensions of religious traditions instead of only receiving doctrinal information (Putkonen et al., 2025). Islamic education also needs to connect religious knowledge with spirituality, ethical responsibility, and students' lived experiences (Chanifah et al., 2021). Through this connection, prayer is understood not only as a legal obligation but also as a practice that shapes personal consciousness and moral orientation.

The findings suggest that reflective dialogue helped students formulate their own reasons for praying. Some students began to associate Dhuhr prayer with a sense of peace, gratitude, discipline, and closeness to Allah. This development represented a movement from externally imposed behaviour toward personal acceptance. Students still recognised prayer as a religious obligation, but they increasingly understood its relevance to their daily lives.

This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which distinguishes controlled motivation from autonomous motivation. Controlled behaviour depends on rewards, punishment, pressure, or external evaluation. Autonomous behaviour develops when individuals understand and accept the value of an action as personally important. Teachers can support this internalization by providing meaningful explanations, acknowledging learners' experiences, and helping them develop competence and responsibility (Bureau et al., 2022).

The result does not imply that students should determine whether obligatory prayer is necessary. Religious obligation remained a clear normative foundation. The educational issue concerned how teachers communicated that obligation. Teachers who combined clear religious expectations with meaningful explanations generated stronger student engagement than teachers who relied entirely on commands and sanctions.

4. Supportive Supervision and the Transition from Control to Self-Regulation

The fourth finding showed that supervision remained necessary, especially for students whose prayer habits were not well established. Teachers monitored classroom departure, ablution, attendance, prayer-row formation, and student behaviour during worship. However, the most effective supervision combined clear structure with respectful communication.

Teachers initially used direct reminders for students who were late or reluctant to participate. They then used personal guidance to understand the reasons behind the behaviour. Students responded more positively when teachers corrected them privately, listened to their difficulties, and explained the consequences of neglecting prayer. Public

reprimands sometimes produced immediate compliance, but they could also generate embarrassment, resentment, avoidance, or resistance.

The findings demonstrate that structure and autonomy support should not be treated as opposing approaches. Students need rules, schedules, guidance, monitoring, and feedback. They also need respect, explanations, emotional support, and opportunities to assume responsibility. Recent meta-analytic evidence shows that the combination of autonomy support and instructional structure produces stronger motivational outcomes than control without support or freedom without guidance (Patzak & Zhang, 2025).

Teacher autonomy support is also associated with stronger student engagement, self-regulation, competence, and autonomous motivation when teachers provide rationales, acknowledge learners' perspectives, and reduce unnecessary controlling language (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that social contexts supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness strengthen students' autonomous motivation, while controlling environments increase externally regulated motivation (Bureau et al., 2022).

The study identified a gradual transition in students' motivation. At the first level, students prayed mainly because teachers monitored them. At the second level, students began to recognise that prayer was important but still needed reminders. At the third level, students prepared for prayer independently, reminded their peers, and maintained the practice even when teachers were not physically present. These three levels can be described as controlled compliance, emerging internalization, and self-regulated worship.

This pattern represents an important contribution of the study. It shows that the success of a school prayer programme should not be measured only through attendance. Attendance records reveal physical participation but do not fully explain students' motivation, understanding, or spiritual awareness. Schools need qualitative indicators such as punctuality without coercion, independent preparation, willingness to remind peers, consistency outside the formal programme, and students' ability to explain the personal meaning of prayer.

5. Peer Involvement and Collective Religious Responsibility

The fifth finding indicated that peer relationships influenced students' participation in Dhuhr prayer. Students were more willing to attend congregational prayer when their close friends also participated. Positive peer groups reminded one another, prepared for ablution together, organised prayer equipment, and encouraged punctuality. Negative peer influence appeared when students delayed leaving the classroom, talked during preparation, avoided supervision, or treated the programme as a compulsory routine.

Teachers responded by assigning students as prayer coordinators, muezzins, prayer-equipment organisers, attendance assistants, and peer reminders. These responsibilities gave students active roles in the religious programme. Student involvement reduced complete dependence on teachers and strengthened collective ownership of congregational prayer. This result can be explained through the need for relatedness. Students are more likely to internalize expected behaviour when they feel connected to significant people and accepted within a supportive community. Bureau et al. found that relatedness support contributes to autonomous motivation because students more readily accept values communicated by individuals and groups with whom they have meaningful relationships (Bureau et al., 2022).

Peer involvement also transformed prayer from an individual obligation conducted under institutional supervision into a shared religious practice. Congregational prayer allowed students to experience equality, order, leadership, cooperation, and belonging. However, teachers still needed to ensure that peer monitoring did not turn into ridicule,

labelling, or social pressure. Peer support was most effective when students invited, assisted, and reminded one another respectfully.

6. Institutional and Family Support

The results showed that teachers' strategies were more effective when supported by school policies, leadership, facilities, and family communication. Adequate prayer space, clean ablution facilities, sufficient prayer equipment, clear scheduling, and cooperation among teachers made the programme easier to implement. School leaders also strengthened consistency by requiring all teachers to support the prayer programme rather than assigning full responsibility to Islamic Religious Education teachers.

This finding aligns with Islamic-oriented educational leadership, which places spirituality, ethical responsibility, consultation, and collective accountability at the centre of school leadership (Alazmi & Bush, 2024). Research on educational leadership in Muslim societies also shows that religious values need to guide organisational structures, decisions, professional relationships, and school practices (Arar et al., 2022).

Family support remained uneven. Some students came from families that maintained regular congregational prayer and provided consistent reminders. Others experienced limited religious supervision at home. The variation affected students' readiness to participate in the school programme. Muslim parents can hold different understandings of religious formation, identity, everyday religiosity, and the goals of Islamic education, which creates varied religious experiences among students before they enter school (Kolb, 2023).

Teachers addressed this challenge through communication with parents, reports on student participation, and requests for continued prayer guidance at home. However, family communication was generally less systematic than school-based supervision. The finding suggests that sustainable internalization requires continuity between school and home. Schools cannot fully develop self regulated worship when students receive contradictory expectations across their daily environments.

Discussion

The overall findings demonstrate that the internalization of Dhuhr prayer awareness is a gradual pedagogical process. It begins with external structure but should progress toward personal acceptance and independent practice. Teacher exemplarity creates moral credibility. Habituation provides behavioural regularity. Meaning-oriented instruction develops understanding. Supportive supervision strengthens motivation. Peer and family involvement build a social environment that sustains the practice.

The findings also show that no single strategy can produce complete internalization. Habituation without explanation risks creating mechanical behaviour. Explanation without practice limits religious education to cognitive knowledge. Supervision without relational support may produce resistance. Teacher modelling without institutional consistency may lose its influence. Family communication without school structure may also fail to sustain daily practice.

The study therefore proposes an integrated model consisting of five stages: modelling, habituation, meaning construction, supported participation, and self-regulation. Modelling introduces visible religious conduct. Habituation establishes repeated practice. Meaning construction connects practice with spiritual understanding. Supported participation helps students overcome behavioural and motivational barriers. Self-regulation appears when students perform Dhuhr prayer because they understand, accept, and personally value the obligation.

This model contributes to Islamic Religious Education by distinguishing ritual participation from worship awareness. The central indicator of success is not simply whether students enter the prayer area. Success also concerns why they participate, how they interpret prayer, whether they can act without constant supervision, and whether the practice becomes part of their religious identity.

The study concludes that teachers should maintain clear rules and consistent prayer routines while gradually reducing unnecessary control. They should provide explanations, personal mentoring, reflective dialogue, and meaningful student responsibilities. School leaders should strengthen facilities, scheduling, teacher coordination, and family partnerships. Through these combined efforts, Dhuhr prayer can develop from a compulsory school programme into a consciously accepted and independently maintained form of worship.

Conclusion

This study concludes that teachers internalize students' awareness of Dhuhr prayer through five interconnected strategies: teacher exemplarity, structured habituation, meaning-oriented religious instruction, supportive supervision, and collective involvement. Teacher exemplarity provides a visible model of religious commitment, while structured habituation establishes regularity and discipline in students' worship practices. Meaning-oriented instruction helps students understand prayer as a personal spiritual obligation, not merely a school routine. Supportive supervision also encourages students to move from externally controlled compliance toward independent and self-regulated prayer observance.

The findings show that the success of a Dhuhr prayer programme cannot be measured only by attendance or physical participation. Genuine internalization appears when students understand the meaning of prayer, prepare themselves without direct commands, participate consistently, and maintain worship even when teachers are not present. This process develops gradually through modelling, habituation, meaning construction, supported participation, and self-regulation.

The study also confirms that teachers cannot develop prayer awareness through a single strategy. Habituation without reflection may create mechanical behaviour, while instruction without practice may remain limited to cognitive understanding. Effective internalization requires consistent cooperation among teachers, school leaders, peers, and families. Schools should therefore provide adequate prayer facilities, clear schedules, coordinated supervision, reflective religious activities, and continuous communication with parents.

This study contributes to Islamic Religious Education by distinguishing ritual participation from genuine worship awareness. It offers an integrated framework for understanding how teachers transform Dhuhr prayer from a compulsory school activity into a consciously accepted religious practice. Future studies should examine this process in different educational settings and explore how students maintain prayer awareness outside school and over longer periods.

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