

Duha Prayer in Building Religious Habits among Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Students

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Abstract

Purpose: This article has three research objectives. 1) To describe the procedure of wudhu (ablution) before Duha prayer in building religious habits among elementary school students. 2) To describe the implementation of Duha prayer in building religious habits among elementary school students. 3) To explore the practice of prayer after Duha prayer in building religious habits..

Methodology: : This study used a qualitative-ethnographic approach. Data collection was conducted through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Results: The results show that students perform ablution procedures in accordance with Islamic law. These ablution procedures serve as a means of instilling religious values. The routine practice of Duha prayer instills discipline and devotion in students and builds religious habits. The practice of prayer after Duha prayer has an impact on strengthening spiritual awareness. These religious habits can grow through consistent and meaningful prayer practices

Applications/Originality/Value: This study shows that wudhu, regular Duha prayers, and prayers after salat are effective in building discipline, devotion, and spiritual awareness in students. These findings provide practical guidance for teachers and schools in consistently instilling religious values, as well as adding to the understanding of the direct relationship between daily worship practices and the formation of religious habits in children.

Introduction

Duha prayer is a sunnah worship that is believed to be able to form religious habits and instill positive character in students when done consistently. This worship strengthens faith and fosters values of discipline and responsibility, making it an effective means of shaping the moral character of students (Daheri & Curup, 2025).

The habit of performing Duha prayer can be explained through Thorndike's connectionism theory. Through the law of exercise, behaviors that are performed repeatedly, such as praying at a fixed time, can become habits. Meanwhile, the law of effect shows that religious behavior will persist when followed by positive responses, either in the form of inner peace or appreciation from teachers (Yusuf et al., 2022). Thus, a series of activities such as wudhu (Islamic ablution), prayer, and supplication are a process of repeated practice that can form religious habits if done in a focused manner.

Religious habits at the research site have not yet been fully optimized. Interviews with the principal revealed that some students still do not understand the correct procedure for wudu. Teachers also observed that the orderliness in performing salat is not consistent and that the appreciation of prayer after Salat Duha is still low. Document analysis revealed that although Salat Duha is scheduled every day, its implementation is often hampered by time constraints. Previous studies also show that the contribution of Salat Duha to the development of students' religiosity is still low (Ridhwan et al., 2025). In the international context, the implementation of prayer in schools is generally the responsibility of teachers, but its implementation often faces technical obstacles and limited supervision (Malik & Setiawan, 2024).

The root causes of the suboptimal practice of Duha prayer can be traced to two sides, namely teachers and students. Teacher factors are an important cause of the suboptimal practice of Duha prayer. The guidance process still emphasizes technical aspects rather than instilling the meaning of worship. In fact, the success of religious practices is greatly influenced by quality guidance (Ristanti & Rofiq, 2023). Teachers need to act as spiritual mentors, not just supervisors, so that students' awareness of worship can develop (Danuwara & Giyoto, 2024). Additionally, value-based clinical supervision has been proven to enhance teachers' capacity in nurturing students' character (Sutama et al., 2022).

From the students' perspective, challenges arise because some still perform Duha Prayer as a formal routine. Low motivation to worship, insufficient understanding of worship, and unstable discipline are obstacles in forming comprehensive religious habits. Internal factors such as motivation and understanding of the value of worship have a significant influence on the formation of students' religiosity (Ridhwan et al., 2025). This shows that the habit of praying should not only focus on technical aspects but also strengthen spiritual awareness.

Previous studies on the habit of performing the Duha prayer in building religious habits have been conducted in several countries. The results of previous studies on the implementation of Duha prayer in Indonesia, Malaysia, and

Thailand concluded, among other things, that 1) the habit of performing Duha prayer can serve as a means of strengthening religious values and shaping the character of students at school. 2) The implementation of Duha prayer fosters time discipline and a love for the Qur'an in children aged 6–12 years. 3) The role of teachers can reduce deviant behavior among Muslim students through supervision of wudu and prayer. (Fajeri et al., 2022; Ramadhan & Lisnawati, 2024; Yugo, 2024). The results of previous studies differ from this study, which focuses on an in-depth exploration of the procedures for wudhu (Islamic ablution) and the implementation of Duha prayer. The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of the practice of prayer after Duha prayer.

Previous studies on Duha prayer were also conducted in India and Australia. The results of these studies concluded, among other things, that 1) Duha prayer can strengthen the discipline and spiritual security of Muslim students, and 2) Duha prayer can strengthen students' ethics and discipline. (Abdalla et al., 2020; Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2022). These previous research results differ from the research conducted, which focuses on an in-depth exploration of the planning, implementation, and final activities after the Duha prayer. The novelty of the research lies in the in-depth exploration of the stages of prayer and the practice of prayer afterwards.

Based on this brief description, although research on Duha prayer has been conducted in various countries, most previous studies have only highlighted the impact of worship or the technical aspects of its implementation. There is still little research explaining how the complete sequence of wudhu (Islamic ablution), prayer implementation, and prayers function simultaneously in shaping students' religious habits, particularly through the perspective of Thorndike's connectionism theory. In addition, the ethnographic approach in observing the process of worship habits in elementary schools has not been widely used, so that the dynamics of religious habits in the classroom are not comprehensively described. Therefore, this study offers a new contribution through an in-depth exploration of the stages of wudu, the practice of Salat Duha, and the prayers that follow at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan Kartasura to see how religious habits are formed through the process of repetition and reinforcement of behavior.

This article has three research objectives. 1) To describe the procedure of wudhu (Islamic ablution) before Salat Duha in building religious habits among students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. 2) To describe the implementation of Salat Duha in building religious habits among students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. 3) To explore the practice of Salat Duha prayers in building religious habits among students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, which allows researchers to enter the natural environment of the school to understand religious cultural practices, social interactions, and the meanings formed by students and teachers in the Duha prayer activities (Varis, 2020). Ethnography provides space for researchers to conduct in-depth observations of religious behaviors, practices, and values that develop in madrasahs (Mahendra et al., 2024). This approach is also relevant to Thorndike's *connectionism* theory, which views habituation as the result of repeated behavior and its consequences. It allows researchers to directly observe how *the law of exercise* (repeated practices such as wudhu (Islamic ablution), salat, and prayer) shapes students' religious habits, and how *the law of effect* (teacher appreciation, spiritual calm, and positive experiences) reinforces these behaviors.

The research has obtained ethical approval from the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Surakarta. The data collection process was carried out with the principle of *informed consent*, in which the students' parents, teachers, and school officials gave written consent before the research began. The identities of all participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of sensitive information to protect the children's privacy. All data was stored securely and used only for academic purposes. The researcher acted as an *observer-participant*, regularly attending Duha prayer activities without interfering with the worship.

The research was conducted at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan, Kartasura District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java. This school is an A-accredited madrasah ibtidaiyah (elementary Islamic school) and is known for its excellent characteristics, one of which is its strategic location in a densely populated residential area and close to Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, creating a religious, active, and dynamic educational environment.

The research period lasted for six (6) months in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research period was divided into three main stages, namely planning for one month, research implementation for three months, and reporting for two months. The planning stage was carried out in June 2025 and included a literature review, proposal preparation, obtaining permission from the madrasah, and preparing instruments in the form of interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis. The implementation phase will take place from July to September 2025 and will include data collection through in-depth interviews, participatory observation of the Duha prayer, and document analysis. The validity of the data will be tested through source and method triangulation, as well as data display in accordance with the research objectives to ensure accurate and reliable results. The reporting phase will take place over two months, from October to November 2025.

The subjects of this study were the principal, the teacher assisting with Salat Duha, and the students of the MI where the research was conducted, who were involved in the habit of performing Salat Duha. The research informants consisted of the principal, two classroom teachers, and 18 students who were selected purposively based on teacher recommendations, taking into account variations in religious abilities.

Data collection was conducted through interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, which are the three main techniques in qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding ([Busetto et al., 2020](#)). Field notes were used to capture nonverbal details and the context of interactions that did not emerge in the interviews. Interviews and observations served as primary data ([Zahle, 2023](#)), while school documents, activity schedules, teacher notes, and other documents served as secondary data that strengthened the validity of the findings ([Chand, 2025](#)).

Data validity is maintained through four aspects of trustworthiness, namely: 1) *Credibility*, data obtained through triangulation of sources, namely teachers, students, and triangulation techniques obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. 2) *Transferability*, providing a detailed contextual description of the school, Salat Duha activities, and participant conditions. 3) *Dependability*, systematic recording of the research process, including changes during observation. 4) *Confirmability*, carried out by maintaining researcher reflexivity and separating descriptive notes from interpretations so that findings are not influenced by personal bias. Triangulation is still used to strengthen validity, but it is supported by the overall principles of trustworthiness ([Mahendra et al., 2024](#); [Schlunegger et al., 2024](#)).

Data analysis was conducted using a flow model that included data organization, coding, grouping, and meaning extraction ([Bingham, 2023](#)). This model helps researchers comprehensively examine the narrative flow, particularly in mapping the process of wudu, the performance of Salat Duha, and the practice of students' prayers ([Gülpinar, 2024](#)). The analysis was repeated to identify patterns of religious behavior formed through practice (*law of exercise*) and reinforced through positive responses (*law of effect*), as described in Thorndike's theory.

Result

This study used three data collection techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal (T), the PAI teacher who also accompanied the Duha prayer (D), and two students (SA and DV) as the main informants. Observations covered the process of wudu, the performance of Duha prayer, and the recitation of Duha prayers, while documentation was obtained from photos of activities, attendance records, and worship rules at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan Kartasura. The results showed that the performance of wudu (Islamic ablution), Duha prayer, and prayers was not only routine but also formed the students' religious habits. Orderly wudu (Islamic ablution) from intention, washing the face, hands to the elbows, wiping the head, to the feet instills discipline, order, and thoroughness. Regular Duha prayer encourages consistent participation, willingness to worship, and steadfastness. Reciting prayers strengthens spiritual awareness through understanding the meaning of asking for sustenance, acknowledging Allah's power, and hoping for goodness in this world and the hereafter. PAI teachers act as facilitators, while the principal provides religious policy guidance.

Table 1. Subject

Name	Subject
IT	S1 (Subject 1)
D	S2 (Subject 2)
SA	S3 (Subject 3)
DV	S4 (Subject 4)

The observation results show that students perform wudu before Duha prayer with the guidance of the teacher. The steps of wudu, such as reciting the intention, washing the face, washing the hands up to the elbows, wiping part of the head, and washing the feet up to the ankles, are carried out in sequence. However, some students still appear to be in a hurry, especially when washing their elbows and heels, so they need direct guidance from the teacher.

The Duha prayer is performed routinely every morning before classes begin. Students enter the prayer room in an orderly manner and participate in the prayer either in congregation or individually. Student participation is high, and most of them show consistency and perform their prayers willingly without feeling burdened. After the prayer, the teacher leads the recitation of prayers. The students recite the prayers solemnly and understand that these prayers contain requests for sustenance, acknowledgment of Allah's power, and requests for the blessings of the hereafter.

Figure1 . Interview with the Principal



- P: *“How do you see the role of wudhu before Duha Prayer in shaping student’religious habits?”*
- S1: *“Wudhu is very important. From the intention alone, you can see a change. The children begin to understand. When washing their faces, hands up to their elbows, rubbing their heads, and feet up to their heels, they learn discipline. This trains their attention to detail ”*
- P: *“How do you assess the students’ participation in Duha prayer”*
- S1: *“Alhamdulillah, their participation is high. Some initially joined because they were invited by the teacher, but eventually they became consistent on their own. Many come early in the morning because they want to participate in Duha. And importantly, they don't feel burdened”*
- P: *“How do you see the development of students' habits in performing Duha prayer?”*
- S1: *“Now we see that their participation is not only because of the school schedule, but because it has become a habit. Many have begun to show consistency, for example, continuing to participate even without being reminded. Some even come early so they won't be late for Duha prayer. And what's encouraging is that they don't feel burdened. In fact, Duha prayer has become a moment they look forward to because it calms their hearts before classes begin.”*
- P: *“Does the Duha prayer have a specific impact on the students?”*
- S1: *“We see that students are increasingly understanding the meaning of prayer. There are many meanings within it. The children become calmer and have better spiritual awareness.”*

Figure2 . Interview with the religion teacher



- P: *“Do the students already understand the correct order of wudhu?”*
- S2: *“Alhamdulillah, they are starting to understand. In the past, many were confused about whether to wash their feet immediately after washing their hands. Now they know the correct order: intention, face, hands up to the elbows, head, then feet, and in order. This builds discipline because the order cannot be skipped”*
- P: *“How do you handle students who are still rushing during wudhu?”*
- S2: *“I usually remind them, ‘Take your time; what matters is that it’s valid.’ If the face or hands appear uneven, I guide them again. They learn that worship requires sincerity, not speed.”*
- P: *“Do students always arrive on time for Duha prayer?”*
- S2: *“Most of them arrive on time. Some even come early so they won't be late. ”*
- P: *“Do the students understand the meaning of the prayers they recite after Duha prayer?”*
- S2: *“Yes, most of them understand. Because we make it a habit to read aloud so that the children can follow clearly. I also explain that prayer is not just recitation, but a request for sustenance and goodness in life. After being given an explanation, they read it more solemnly.”*
- P: *“How is the progress of the students’ memorization of the Duha prayer?”*
- S2: *“Their memorization is much better now because we have made it a habit to read aloud, so they are accustomed to it.”*

Figure3 . Interview with students, subjects 3 and 4



- P: "How do you start wudhu before Duha prayer?"
S3: "I start with the intention first, then wash my face three times. The teacher always says that intention is the most important"
S4: "I start with the intention, then wash my face. But I used to rush"
P: "Which part do you most often forget during wudhu?"
S3: "I used to forget whether to wash the left or right hand first."
S4: "Once I memorized it, I don't forget anymore."
P: "How is your habit of performing Duha prayer every day? Is it out of your own volition?"
S3: "Yes, ma'am, I attend every day. At first it was because of my teacher, but now I want to do it myself because I feel more peaceful after prayer. I was late once and felt embarrassed, so now I usually arrive early."
S4: "I also participate every day; it's become a habit and my own choice. If I don't participate, it feels incomplete. The atmosphere is calm and comfortable, and I rarely arrive late because I don't want to miss it."
P: "Do you feel burdened by participating in Duha prayer, and what do you feel after completing it?"
S3: "No, ma'am it doesn't feel burdensome to me."
S4: "Not at all, ma'am. I actually feel comfortable because the prayer is soothing."
P: "How do you recite the Duha prayer, and which part do you understand the most from its content, especially regarding the request for sustenance and acknowledgment of Allah's power?"
S3: "I read it with my friends, slowly so I don't make mistakes."
S4: "I follow my teacher in reciting it aloud while trying to memorize it. The part I understand most easily is about all sustenance belonging to Allah."

Figure4 . The Process of Duha Prayer



Based on the observations documented in Figure 4, the Duha prayer at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan Kartasura was conducted in an orderly and structured manner. Students entered the prayer room in turns and took their prayer positions as instructed by the PAI teacher. The teacher ensured that all students had performed wudhu correctly before beginning the series of prayers. The Duha prayer was performed both in congregation and individually, but remained under the supervision of teachers to ensure order and solemnity. The atmosphere in the prayer room was relatively calm, with natural lighting and conditions conducive to student concentration. After the prayer was completed, the teacher then led the recitation of the Duha prayer aloud so that all students could follow clearly and in unison. Observations show that most students participate in this activity with solemnity, demonstrating discipline, calmness, and enthusiasm in performing their prayers. This process also shows that these religious activities have become ingrained routines and contribute to the formation of positive religious habits in students.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the implementation of Duha prayer at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan is carried out routinely and structurally, starting from the ablution activity to the recitation of prayers. This routine not only develops

technical worship skills but also plays a role in shaping students' religious habits. When linked to Thorndike's connectionism theory, the series of worship activities performed repeatedly, starting from wudhu (Islamic ablution), prayer, to prayer, is in line with the law of exercise, which is the principle that habits are formed through continuous practice. The students' orderliness in following the sequence of wudhu and their discipline in arriving on time are evidence that the repetition of worship behaviors strengthens their religious patterns ([Bachtiar & Salim, 2025](#)). Additionally, the intention in wudu functions as mental readiness that strengthens the relationship between stimulus and response, as explained by Thorndike that inner readiness accelerates the formation of behavior ([Zaleha et al., 2025](#)).

The very active role of teachers in guiding each stage of worship demonstrates Thorndike's law of effect mechanism. Teachers provide feedback in the form of guidance, correction, and positive reinforcement so that students' religious behavior becomes stronger. When teachers praise the neatness of wudhu (Islamic ablution), appreciate punctuality, and provide explanations about the meaning of prayer, students receive a pleasant emotional experience and then repeat the behavior. This is in line with the findings ([Anggraini & Anwar, 2024](#)), which states that teacher guidance can increase spiritual awareness and religious responsibility. Thus, teachers are not only supervisors but also sources of reinforcement that make worship a meaningful experience, not just an obligation.

The findings regarding students' enthusiasm in participating in Duha prayer indicate that the habit-forming process has reached the stage of internalization. The consistency of students in arriving early, reciting the Duha prayer aloud, and trying to maintain order during worship shows that they have felt the positive consequences of these activities, such as calmness, comfort, and confidence. This reinforces Thorndike's theory that behavior will be maintained if it results in satisfaction or comfort, in accordance with the law of effect principle. The interpretation of the Duha prayer as a request for sustenance and acknowledgment of Allah's power also provides a positive spiritual experience ([Azurazmi et al., 2024](#)). Understanding the meaning of prayer can deepen students' spirituality because they not only memorize the recitation but also feel an emotional connection to worship ([Sunarmo et al., 2023](#)).

Prayers after the Duha prayer, understood as requests for sustenance, worldly goodness, and salvation in the hereafter, also play a role in shaping religious character. Prayers that are recited regularly and meaningfully strengthen the stimulus-response relationship, so that spiritual meaning becomes part of students' worship habits. This is in line with research ([Selvia & Dimiyati, 2022](#)) which shows that prayers that are practiced consistently can strengthen religious character.

Overall, this study shows that the activities of wudhu (Islamic ablution), performing Salat Duha, and practicing prayer form a mutually reinforcing sequence. From Thorndike's perspective, this habit of worship is formed through two main mechanisms, namely repeated practice (law of exercise) and positive reinforcement (law of effect). Daily activities provide behavioral stability, while teacher appreciation and spiritual experiences provide pleasant consequences, ensuring that religious behavior persists over time. These findings support the research objective that wudhu, salat, and prayer are not only rituals but also form religious habits that are internalized in students ([Harfi et al., 2025](#)). Thus, Salat Duha at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan has functioned as an effective means of religious character learning through the mechanisms of habit formation, reinforcement, and teacher guidance.

Conclusion

Duha prayer in building religious habits among students at MI Muhammadiyah Gonilan is evident through the regularity of the series of worship activities, which include wudhu (Islamic ablution), performing prayers, and reciting prayers. The results of the study show that students perform wudhu in accordance with Islamic law, and this consistent practice serves as a means of instilling religious values through discipline and precision. The routine performance of Duha prayer also instills discipline and devotion in worship, thereby forming intrinsic motivation and a consistent attitude. The consistent practice of prayer after Duha prayer strengthens students' spiritual awareness, showing that religious habits can grow from the repeated internalization of prayer. This entire process is in line with *the law of exercise* and *the law of effect* in connectionism theory, where repeated practice and reinforcement by teachers form stable religious behavior.

The contribution of this study lies in the integration of wudhu (ablution), Salat Duha (morning prayer), and prayer as a series of religious practices that are rarely studied in depth in the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah (elementary Islamic schools). In practical terms, the results of this study provide guidelines for teachers and schools regarding the importance of active guidance, instruction in the procedures for wudhu, consistency in performing Salat Duha, and explanation of the meaning of prayer so that students do not merely follow the routine of worship but truly develop a deep spiritual understanding and awareness.

The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which only focuses on one madrasah with a limited number of subjects, thus not reflecting the diversity of religious practice in other schools. Further research is recommended to expand the context, compare between madrasahs, or explore the relationship between the habit of Salat Duha and other aspects such as character, learning motivation, and emotional regulation so that the picture of the formation of students' religious habits becomes more comprehensive.

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