



Psychological Review: The Development of Children's Religion and Its Influencing Factors

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Abstract

Introduction to The Problem: The development of religion occurs significantly in children, making it important for parents and educators to understand children's religious development. **Purpose:** This study aims to examine children's religious development from a developmental psychology perspective. **Design/methods/ approach:** This study is a quantitative study using a library research method. Data were collected from various written sources, including digital academic databases, and then analyzed using data triangulation and content analysis. **Findings:** The results of this study show that child development is influenced by both internal factors, including heredity and personality, and external factors, such as the family, school, and community environment. There are three theories of religious spiritual growth in children, including dependency theory, religious instinct theory, and fitrah theory. Furthermore, the stages of child development are divided based on Ernest Harms's views, including the fairy tale stage, the reality stage, and the individual stage. In addition, Imam Bawani divides the phases of children's religious development into the phase in the womb, the baby phase, the childhood phase, and the school phase. This study indicates that parents and the environment have a crucial role in shaping children's faith from an early age.

Keywords: Psychology of Developmental, Religious, Child, Parents

Introduction

Developmental psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on behavioral changes and the abilities of individuals from childhood to adulthood. According to Elizabeth B. Hurlock in her book *Developmental Psychology*, this field studies human development across the entire lifespan – not just childhood, but also adolescence and adulthood (Hurlock, 2005). One crucial aspect of a learner's development is religious or spiritual development, which involves how children understand, feel, and practice spiritual values in line with their developmental stage.

Children's religious development is influenced not only by cognitive and emotional factors but also by social, cultural environments, and the parenting styles they experience (Santrock, 2012). In

early childhood, children's understanding of concepts such as divinity, worship, and moral values is still concrete and influenced by direct experiences (Elkind, 1972). As they grow older, their thinking becomes more abstract and reflective, leading to a more complex understanding of religion.

In the context of education, understanding the stages of children's religious development is crucial for educators to provide approaches that align with the psychological needs of the students (Daradjat, 2004). Without a proper understanding, teaching religious values can become ineffective or even cause confusion among children. Therefore, this paper will discuss in-depth the development of children's religion from the perspective of developmental psychology, including the factors that influence it and its implications in the educational process in schools.

Literature Review

In the context of previous research, several studies have explored the psychological aspects of children's religious development. This aligns with the view that religious development cannot be separated from the dynamics of cognitive, affective, and the influences of social and family environments, as outlined in the introduction. Muntaha, Suyuti, and Nursikin (2022) explain that children's religious development occurs in three stages: fairytale (preschool age), realistic (elementary school age), and individual (adolescent age). At each stage, children's understanding of God and religious practices develops from imaginative to more logical and personal perspectives. They also emphasize the importance of religious habituation starting from the prenatal stage, through spiritual stimulation from the mother, as an early experience that impacts the child's religiousness.

Meanwhile, Herawati, Hayati, and Salman (2021) highlight that the inherent religious nature in children is an innate potential that needs to be developed through consistent education, role modeling, and meaningful emotional experiences. They emphasize that the consistency of parental roles, the social environment, and approaches that address both the psychomotor and spiritual dimensions of children are crucial factors in forming healthy religious awareness. When these aspects are neglected, the risk of imbalances in the child's religious development tends to increase. Thus, these findings not only strengthen the urgency for educators and parents to understand children's religious development more holistically but also provide an important conceptual foundation for further discussions on the definition, characteristics, dynamics, and influencing factors of children's religious development, which will be elaborated on in this article.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method. A literature review is a data collection technique that involves searching, studying, and reconstructing information from various existing written sources (Abdurrahman, 2024). Meanwhile, qualitative research generates descriptive data that is analyzed interpretatively, rather than through statistical procedures or numerical calculations (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). Data collection is carried out through the exploration of both primary and secondary literature sources, including reference books and academic journal articles.

Subsequently, data analysis uses content analysis techniques by examining, organizing, and interpreting the content of the sources systematically. The goal of this analysis is to explore key themes, identify patterns from various literatures, and draw in-depth and meaningful conclusions (Waruwu, 2024). To ensure the validity of the data, a data triangulation technique is applied by comparing information from various references and integrating different theoretical approaches.

Result

1. Definition of Religion

Etymologically, the term "religion" originates from the Sanskrit language, which means a guide for life, rules, the path to truth, or a form of devotion to God. In this sense, religion is viewed as a principle that directs humans in leading a meaningful life with spiritual value. Meanwhile, according to Abuddin Nata, the word "religion" consists of two parts: "A" meaning "not," and "Gama" meaning "chaos" or "disorder" (Nata, 2009). Thus, implicitly, religion can be understood as a system that brings order, peace, and clear direction to human life, while distancing them from chaos, emptiness, and uncertainty in life. Religion serves as a moral and spiritual foundation that guides humans toward a more harmonious life, both in their relationships with others and with God.

According to Robert H. Thouless, religion can be understood as an attitude or way of adjusting to life's realities as a whole. This attitude is not limited to responses to the physical world, bound by space and time (the spatio-temporal physical world), but also includes a connection to a broader, transcendent dimension the spiritual world. In this view, religion becomes a bridge between the tangible physical life and the non-material world, which is believed to have a profound influence on human existence. Therefore, religion is not merely a belief system or ritual but a spiritual orientation that guides humans to live with an awareness of a reality beyond physical boundaries (Thouless, R, 1992).

In the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, as cited by Rakhmat (2005), there are various perspectives from scholars regarding the definition of religion. Each figure emphasizes different aspects based on their philosophical or theological viewpoints:

- a. James Martineau defines religion as a belief in the existence of a living and active God. In his view, God is not just an abstract concept, but the Soul and Divine Will that plays a role in governing the universe. Moreover, God has a moral relationship with humans, indicating an ethical dimension in the relationship between humans and God.
- b. Herbert Spencer views religion from an epistemological perspective, seeing it as the recognition of a higher power or reality that transcends the capacity of human reason and knowledge. In this sense, religion becomes humanity's way of acknowledging its limitations in the face of a transcendent entity that cannot be fully explained through logic or science.
- c. J.G. Frazer defines religion within the framework of interaction between humans and supernatural forces. According to him, religion is the human endeavor to appease or reconcile with the supernatural powers believed to influence and control the course of nature and human life. This definition highlights the ritualistic aspect and the practical function of religion in social and cultural life.
- d. Matthew Arnold interprets religion as an ethical form that has been reinforced, deified, and enlightened by deep emotions. In his view, religion is not merely a collection of moral rules, but ethics that are enlivened by emotion and spirituality. This indicates that the religious dimension involves intense inner involvement, not just rationality.
- e. C.P. Tiele defines religion as an inner disposition or a pure and noble framework of thought, which he calls piety. This emphasizes that religion is more than just belief and ritual; it is an inner quality that reflects sincerity, devotion, and deep respect for the highest reality.
- f. Edward Caird presents a definition of religion from the perspective of the philosophy of consciousness. According to him, religion is an expression of the most fundamental human attitude toward the universe, reflecting the deepest meaning and ultimate purpose of human consciousness regarding existence. In this view, religion becomes a comprehensive reflection on the meaning of life, the direction of existence, and humanity's relationship with all that exists (Saifuddin, 2019).

Overall, these scholars suggest that religion is not just a system of belief in the supernatural but also reflects moral attitudes, existential awareness, emotional experience, and the inner orientation of humans toward life, the universe, and God.

2. Characteristics of Children's Religion

According to Clark in Masganti Sit (2017:163), the characteristics of children's religion are divided into several traits, including:

- a. Unreflective (Shallow Understanding)

According to Machion's research in Jalaluddin (2012:70) on children's concept of God, 73% believe that God is like a human being. With such an assumption, children tend to accept

religious teachings without critique. The truth they grasp is not profound, so it is sufficient for them, and they are often satisfied with explanations that may sometimes seem illogical. For example, when a child asks, "Where is God?" an answer like "God is in the sky" is enough to satisfy their curiosity. However, some children may develop sharp thinking skills, allowing them to evaluate the religious teachings they receive from others.

b. Egocentric

From the first year of a child's life, they develop an awareness of themselves, which continues to grow alongside their increasing experiences. As their self-awareness develops, doubts about their ego emerge. As children age, their egos become stronger. In this regard, children's religious development tends to emphasize their own interests, seeking religious concepts that align with their personal pleasures. For example, when a child performs prayer, they may do so with the goal of fulfilling personal desires, such as wanting to be loved by their parents.

c. Anthropomorphic

Generally, the concept of God that children have is shaped by their interactions with others. However, children tend to understand the concept of God by attributing human-like qualities to Him. The concept of God in their minds, based on their fantasies, leads them to believe that God's existence is similar to that of humans. They may perceive God's role as finding and punishing those who commit wrongdoings when they go astray. Children may also believe that God can see everything, including their actions and words, as if someone were spying on them.

d. Verbal and Ritualistic

Children's religious development often begins with memorization. They memorize religious phrases and practice them based on the guidance of their parents and teachers. Children tend to enjoy memorizing prayers, religious phrases, and religious songs. According to a study by Jalaluddin (2012:73), these practices significantly influence a child's religious life as they grow older. The study shows that many adults are devout in their worship because of the religious teachings they practiced as children. Verbal practices and ritualistic religious practices are significant and important for children's religious development.

e. Imitative

In everyday life, children engage in religious actions by imitating others, such as their parents, teachers, or even their peers. For instance, a child performing prayer or saying prayers is often the result of observing their surroundings, either through imitation or direct teaching. Psychologists note that children are excellent imitators, and this characteristic is considered a positive asset in religious education. For example, a child may attend Tarawih prayers during Ramadan even if they do not yet understand the proper procedure. However, the religious

teachings that children possess are not solely based on what they were taught as children; religious education greatly influences the development of religious behavior through imitation.

f. Sense of Wonder

The last religious trait in children is a sense of awe and amazement. This wonder is not yet critical or creative in nature. Children are simply amazed by the outward beauty of God's creation. This awe is the first step in the child's need to explore something new. This sense of wonder and amazement can be channeled through stories that evoke awe. For example, a child may feel amazed when hearing the story of Prophet Musa (AS) and his followers, who were helped by Allah SWT in escaping Pharaoh and his army, with a miracle given to Prophet Musa (AS) in the form of the ability to part the Red Sea.

3. Dynamics of Religious Development in Children

There are three theories that explain the religious development of children. These three theories are: the theory of dependence (sense of dependence), the theory of religious instinct, and the theory of fitrah.

a. The Theory of Dependence (Sense of Dependence)

The theory of dependence asserts that the need for religion arises from certain human needs that remain unmet unless a person acknowledges the existence of God. A child feels weak and in need of protection from something stronger, which is God. This sense of dependence becomes the foundational basis for the emergence of religious feelings. This theory of dependence was proposed by Thomas, who stated that humans have four basic needs, which include:

- 1) The desire for protection (security wish)
- 2) The desire to experience new things (new experience wish)
- 3) The desire to receive a response (response wish)
- 4) The desire to be recognized (recognition wish) (Nunzairina et al., 2022).

b. The Theory of Religious Instinct

The belief that humans, including children, are born with an instinct or natural tendency toward religion is supported by the theory of religious instinct proposed by several developmental psychologists. Woodworth stated that religion is an instinct for humans. Religious instinct can drive humans to engage in religious actions. According to Clark, between the ages of 3 to 6, children are able to follow their conscience. Conscience is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong actions. In this theory of conscience, it can be demonstrated that teaching religion to children is crucial, even though some believe that conscience is more related to morality rather than religion. However, Clark believes that the

potential of conscience is a gift from God to children, making it the most important part of the development of their religious life (Nunzairina et al., 2022).

However, religious behavior in children does not immediately manifest because the psychological functions that support the maturation of these instincts have not yet fully developed. As they grow, this instinct motivates children to imitate religious behaviors around them, such as praying or following religious rituals performed by their parents or adults in their environment. A child's religious concept is heavily influenced by their early environment, especially family. Because their understanding is still simple and authoritative at this stage, they tend to accept and imitate religious teachings without criticism. As children learn religious practices through observation and imitation of the behaviors of their parents, teachers, and social surroundings, this imitative trait is seen as a positive foundation in religious education.

Therefore, the religious instinct planted at birth will develop optimally if supported by an environment that consistently provides examples and habituates religious behaviors. This emphasizes the importance of family and education in nurturing a child's faith from an early age.

c. The Theory of Fitrah

Islam emphasizes that every human being is born with a potential for religion, known as "fitrah." Fitrah is an innate tendency or fundamental potential within humans to recognize, believe in, and acknowledge the oneness of Allah as the Creator of humanity and the entire universe. As stated in Allah's words in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 30:

فَاقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth, the nature [fitrah] of Allah upon which He has created mankind. There is no changing the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know” (QS. Ar-Rum: 30)

As mentioned above, every child is born with an unchanging religious fitrah. This fitrah never changes within children. Islam, as the straight religion, advocates the oneness of Allah (Tawhid), remaining pure throughout time. The development or neglect of this Islamic fitrah heavily depends on the role of the parents. In other words, the development of fitrah to submit to Allah can be positively or negatively influenced by the child's environment, especially by their parents, as stated in the following hadith:

“Abu Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'No child is born except with fitrah. His parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, just as an animal gives birth to a perfect animal whose ears are not torn.' (HR. Muslim).

Based on the hadith above, it can be concluded that parents who neglect the religious education of their children are essentially preparing a weak generation for the future. These weaknesses will lead to a lack of religious foundation (Tawhid and Aqidah) being built in the family, which could cause conflicts in the future. This faith-based fitrah exists even before a person is born into this world, as it is present while the human soul resides in the "backbone" of their parents.

In Islamic education, fitrah serves as the primary foundation for instilling religious values from an early age. The early childhood years are considered the golden age to strengthen and nurture the fitrah of faith, as children's imagination, curiosity, and capacity to absorb spiritual values are particularly high at this stage. Fitrah-based education emphasizes the importance of enjoyable learning methods tailored to children's nature, such as playing, singing, storytelling, and engaging with the outside world.

This method helps children to recognize Allah, feel His love, and imitate His attributes in daily life. The role of the family is crucial in providing role models, creating a pious environment, and nurturing a positive image of religion and faith. According to Islam, the potential for religion (fitrah) is a gift that must be preserved and developed from childhood through proper education and a good environment, so that children grow up to become faithful individuals with noble character and love for Allah (Herawati et al., 2021).

According to Ernest Harms' research in his book *The Development of Religion in Children*, as cited in Jalaluddin (2012:66), the religious development of children is divided into three stages:

a. The Fairy Tale Stage

This stage occurs in children aged 3-6 years. Children understand the concept of God through the influence of fantasy and emotions. At this stage, a child's development of the concept of God aligns with their intellectual development, where the understanding of God may seem somewhat unrealistic (Ramayulis, 2007). This fantastical concept also influences children in how they perceive religion, often surrounded by stories that may seem illogical.

In the Qur'an, there are many stories that, while not fairy tales, can be engaging for children if presented in simple and easily understandable language. At this age, children are more focused on the way the teacher narrates the religious stories than on the content itself. For children, stories become more engaging when connected to their childhood experiences, in line with their childlike nature. They will use their own language to express their theological views about God, which are more individual, emotional, and spontaneous (Sit, 2017).

b. The Realistic Stage

This stage begins when children enter elementary school and continues into adolescence. At this stage, the concept of God understood by the child begins to reflect a view based on reality (realism). The understanding of God, which was initially rooted in emotion, shifts toward a more logical and reasoned understanding. Children start to understand God in a more realistic sense. This stage begins around the age of 7 and continues through to the age of 12 (Sit, 2017). A child around 7 years old is seen as starting to develop logical thinking abilities. At this age, it is appropriate to teach children to pray regularly and discipline them if they violate religious rules, as this is viewed not as an act of violence but as a form of affection.

From a psychological perspective, children in this stage begin to imitate religious actions. Therefore, the role of parents is to serve as role models in practicing religious teachings properly. A 7-year-old child has also started to understand the concept of responsibility. They are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong based on rules or norms, rather than emotions. As a result, religion can be taught as a set of beliefs and convictions that must be adhered to and followed.

c. The Individual Stage

This stage occurs in children from the age of 12 and continues throughout their lives. At this stage, children develop emotional sensitivity that aligns with their age-related growth. The individualistic religious concept is divided into three types:

1) The Conventional and Conservative Concept of God

At this stage, children still understand religion by blending it with fantasy. This understanding can be influenced by external factors. For example, the understanding of the Day of Judgment may lead children to imagine Hellfire as similar to fire in the world.

2) A Purified Concept of God

This concept is expressed in a more personal view. Children at this stage can differentiate between what exists in the Hereafter and in the world. For example, they understand that the rivers in Paradise are different from those in the world. Children also begin to realize that God is truly distinct from humans.

3) A Humanistic Concept of God

This concept is influenced by both internal factors, such as age growth, and external factors, such as the experiences the child encounters. Religion becomes a humanistic ethos in their understanding of religious teachings (Sit, 2017). People who understand religion from this humanistic perspective believe that God will always be just toward every individual. They will act in interactions with others as a way of practicing their religious teachings.

Meanwhile, Imam Bawani in Sururin (2004:55) divides the stages of children's religious development into four parts:

a. Fetus Stage

Religious development in this stage is indeed difficult to comprehend, especially when it comes to the spiritual aspect. However, religious development begins when Allah SWT breathes the soul into the fetus, which marks the covenant between humans and their Lord.

b. Infant Stage

In this second stage, understanding the religious development of children is also challenging. However, signs of religious recognition can be found, such as the practice of reciting the call to prayer (adhan) when a child is born.

c. Childhood Stage

The third stage is the right time to teach religious teachings to children. At this stage, children begin to interact with their surroundings, and they observe and experience many things. In this interaction, children get to know God through the words of those around them. This is where the role of parents as role models is crucial in introducing and habituating religious actions, so that children can follow these actions, even through imitation. Habituating religious actions from an early age has a significant impact on religious development in the future.

d. School Age Stage

As other psychological aspects develop, religious development also shows a more realistic improvement. This is influenced by the child's growing intellectual development.

4. Factors Affecting Religious Development in Children

Humans have personalities that can change, meaning a person's traits can be influenced by various factors. This is why character education and the formation of character, especially in children, are essential to improve negative behaviors into more positive ones (Kurniawati, 2022). In general, religious development in children is influenced not only by direct religious teachings but also by both internal and external factors, such as the social and cultural environment around them.

According to Syamsu Yusuf, the development of religiousness in an individual is influenced by two main factors. The first is the internal or inherent factor, which is the human fitrah, the natural tendency to believe in God and acknowledge the existence of a higher power that governs life. The second is the external factor, which comes from the environment, where experiences, social interactions, and surrounding cultures play a role in shaping and influencing the development of an individual's religious attitudes (Hairiyah & Mukhlis, 2023). Below are the main factors that influence the religious development of children:

a. Internal Factors

Since ancient times, humans have had a natural tendency to believe in the existence of supernatural forces or divine entities. In simple or primitive societies, there was a belief in the presence of spirits believed to bring either good or harm. This fact shows that humans inherently have a fitrah (natural disposition) to believe in a power capable of providing both benefit and harm. Over time, this religious fitrah can develop naturally (as in the examples above) or it may be guided by the messengers of Allah SWT, so that the fitrah grows and develops according to His will (Yusuf, 2000).

Like other psychological aspects, religious psychology has also developed various theories to understand the factors that influence the growth of a person's religious attitude. One of its primary focuses is the internal factors that shape the development of religious consciousness. Some of these factors include:

1) Heredity Factor (Genetics, Inherited Traits from Parents)

Genetic factors not only influence the formation of a child's religious traits while still in the womb, but also affect the development of the child's religious psyche after birth. The concept of heredity refers to the potential inherited from the parents through genes, which also plays a role in the child's religious development. The importance of the hereditary factor is emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in a hadith: "Look at where you place your nutfah (semen), for indeed the origin (al-I'rq) is passed on to the child." This hadith implies that the character or traits of the parents have a significant impact on the traits inherited by their children (Herawati et al., 2021). For this reason, Islam encourages us to seek a good spouse in order to have good offspring.

2) Personality Factor

Personality, which is also referred to as identity or self-identity, is a characteristic that differentiates one individual from another. Under normal conditions, every human being individually possesses differences in personality, and these differences also influence the development of their religious consciousness (Andriani, 2017).

b. External Factors

Humans are referred to as homo religious because they have the ability to develop themselves as religious beings. To foster a religious soul, environmental influences through socialization and interaction with others are needed. These external factors can either support or hinder the development of an individual's religious consciousness. Several factors that influence religious development include the following:

1) Environmental Factors

The environment, especially friends and people close to the child, plays a significant role in shaping the child's religious development. The strong influence of the environment requires ongoing effort, guidance, supervision, and prayer from the parents to strengthen the child's religious immunity—not only during childhood (the golden age) but also continuing into adolescence, adulthood, and throughout their life (Herawati et al., 2021).

a) Family Environment

The family is the simplest social unit in human life, consisting of the father, mother, and children. For a child, the family is the first social environment they encounter. Therefore, family life is the primary and most influential environment in shaping the child's development. The role of the family, especially the parents, is crucial in fostering religious awareness in the child (Uswatun & Rohayati, 2023)..

The family is considered the primary determinant in the formation of a child's personality because: (1) the family is the first social group that serves as the child's identification center, (2) the child spends a significant amount of time within the family environment, and (3) family members are significant people who play a crucial role in shaping the child's personality (Hasanah, 2023).

Education within the family will be effective when supported by positive interactions between parents and children, as well as a family atmosphere that encourages virtuous behavior while steering clear of wrongful acts. This helps family members grow in a healthy manner and creates harmony within the household. The influence of the family becomes deeply ingrained, not only within the family itself but also reflected in the religious attitudes and behaviors of each member..

Proper parenting, role modeling, consistency, reflection, and emotional support are key factors for parents in nurturing strong religious and moral values. By applying these approaches, parents can support the healthy development of their children's character and integrity. One effective parenting model for developing religious and moral values is democratic parenting, characterized by open communication between parents and children, as well as providing opportunities for children to express their opinions (Azizah et al., 2024).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that one of the factors influencing the religious development of children is family education. The family is the first place where children receive education, and the primary responsibility in this regard lies with the parents. They are obligated to nurture, guide, and provide appropriate education to their children, especially in terms of religious education (Rizal, 2018).

b) School Environment

The school is a formal educational institution with an integrated program designed to provide guidance, teaching, and training to children, enabling them to develop their potential optimally in physical, psychological (intellectual and emotional), social, and moral-spiritual aspects. This aligns with theories suggesting that institutional education is a continuation of family education (Syafri, 2018). Since parents have limitations in fully educating their children, they entrust the continuation of their children's education to schools, selecting institutions they believe are best suited for their children.

Furthermore, in the context of developing children's religious awareness, religious teachers play a crucial role and bear significant responsibility. In addition to teaching religious knowledge, religious teachers are also expected to shape and improve the child's character, particularly if there are behavioral issues resulting from insufficient guidance in the family environment. Religious teachers must guide all their students toward forming healthy, good, and religious personalities. Therefore, every religious teacher must realize that their attitudes, words, and actions will serve as role models and have a formative influence on the students (Rizal, 2018).

c) Community Environment

The community environment is the social and cultural interaction condition that has a significant potential to influence the development of the child's religious fitrah (Fitrianah, 2019). In community life, children interact with peers (peer groups) and other members of society. If their peers exhibit behavior aligned with religious values and good character, children are likely to be encouraged to act nobly. However, if their peer group displays moral decay, children are at risk of being influenced to engage in negative behavior like theirs (Purwaningsih & Syamsudin, 2022). This situation becomes more likely if the child does not receive adequate religious guidance from their parents, given the dominant influence of peer groups.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the religious development of children is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include elements inherent within the child, such as heredity, innate talents, and personal traits. External factors are closely related to the influence of the surrounding environment. In this regard, the family is the first and most significant environment experienced by the child, while the school acts as an additional educational institution, and the social environment also provides significant influence in the child's life.

Conclusion

The religious development of children is an important part of developmental psychology, as it is closely related to the formation of character, morality, and spirituality from an early age. Understanding how children internalize religious values is crucial for parents and educators to adjust their approaches according to the child's cognitive and emotional development stages. Additionally, the characteristics of religion in children are generally concrete, emotional, and symbolic, in line with their still-developing thinking abilities.

Theories of religious development in children, such as the theory of dependence, the theory of religious instinct, and the theory of fitrah, provide a scientific foundation for understanding how children's religious tendencies emerge and develop. Psychologically, the stages of religious development in children begin with the imitation stage, where children mimic the religious behaviors of adults, moving towards the internalization stage, when religious values and teachings begin to become part of the child's personal identity. This understanding aligns with two models of religious development: Ernest Harms' model (fairy tale, realistic, individual stages) and Imam Bawani's model (fetal, infant, childhood, and school stages). Although these approaches differ, both illustrate the dynamic nature of children's religious development, moving from symbolic and imaginative thinking to more logical, personal, and reflective forms of understanding.

In line with these stages, children's religious development is also highly influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include heredity (genetics), personality, and the religious fitrah that is present from birth. On the other hand, external factors involve the family environment as the primary educator, school as a formal institution reinforcing moral values, and society as the social space that shapes children's real-life religious experiences. This demonstrates that the developmental process is gradual and highly dependent on the quality of stimulation from the surrounding environment, as well as the child's psychological readiness.

Therefore, it is essential for educators and parents to provide appropriate guidance and stimulation through suitable methods. By understanding children's religious development comprehensively, religious nurturing can be carried out effectively and meaningfully, helping to form a generation with strong faith and good character.

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