



The Role of Parents in Cultivating Empathy and Social Concern in Early Childhood through the Habituation of Friday Charity (Sedekah Jum'at)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Friday Charity (Sedekah Jumat) habituation program, the role of parents, and its impact on the development of empathy and social care in children aged 5–6 years at RA Bustanul „Ulum Jayasakti. This research is motivated by the presence of egocentric behavior and a lack of social concern among some early childhood students. This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research subjects include the principal, Group B teachers, and parents. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the Friday Charity habituation program is implemented regularly as part of character education. The role of parents is crucial, particularly through role modeling, providing understanding, and reinforcing values at home. Children who receive active parental guidance demonstrate better development of empathy, such as sharing and showing concern for others, while those who receive less support tend not to display optimal empathetic behavior. In conclusion, the Friday Charity habituation program is effective in fostering empathy and social care in early childhood when supported by active parental involvement and collaboration with the school.

Keywords: Friday Charity, Parental Role, Empathy, Social Care, Early Childhood

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INTRODUCTION

The early stage of a child's life constitutes a fundamental phase that determines the trajectory of identity formation, character development, and the construction of cognitive and behavioral patterns in subsequent stages of development (Oktavianti dkk., 2023). This period is commonly referred to as the *golden age*, a phase in which all domains of development physical, cognitive, social, and emotional experience significant acceleration when supported by appropriate stimulation and a conducive environment (Yusuf, 2022). A supportive environment serves as a primary prerequisite to ensure that children's development proceeds in a balanced manner, preventing intellectual growth from occurring in isolation without the accompaniment of social-emotional maturity (Morrison, 2019).

The social-emotional domain holds a strategic position within the overall developmental process of early childhood. This domain is closely related to children's ability to recognize emotions, understand their own feelings as well as those of others, and regulate emotional responses in an adaptive manner (Kristianto dkk., 2024). Such capacities

form the foundation for establishing healthy social relationships and harmonious interactions (Farhani dkk., 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that children's social-emotional development continues to face various challenges. Phenomena such as egocentric behavior, a low tendency to share, limited willingness to help others, and weak sensitivity toward others' feelings are still frequently observed in early childhood education settings (Saipullah & Yusuf, 2025). This condition underscores that empathy and social concern have not yet developed optimally and therefore require systematic and sustained habituation-based strategies for effective cultivation (Fauzi dkk., 2024).

Empathy serves as a fundamental foundation in the formation of social concern. The ability to understand and feel the emotional conditions of others encourages the emergence of prosocial behaviors such as helping, sharing, and demonstrating care toward the social environment (Hurlock, 1978). The process of internalizing empathetic values cannot be separated from the habituation of moral and religious practices in everyday life. Simple activities such as sharing, assisting others, and exhibiting courteous behavior function as effective media for developing children's social character. Such habituation not only fosters social awareness but also integrates moral and spiritual values into children's personalities from an early age (Dea dkk., 2022).

Parental involvement constitutes a determining factor in the development of children's empathy and social concern. Parents act as the primary role models, whereby children tend to replicate behaviors, attitudes, and forms of communication through processes of imitation (Karman dkk., 2024). Exemplary conduct in sharing, demonstrating care, and maintaining warm communication becomes a central means of instilling empathetic values. Active parental engagement has been shown to significantly influence children's ability to regulate emotions and develop social sensitivity. From an Islamic normative perspective, the urgency of this role is emphasized in the words of Allah SWT in QS. Luqman verses 13–14 (Nu Online, 2025):

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٣) وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ (١٤)

Translation: "And [remember] when Luqman said to his son while he was instructing him, 'O my son, do not associate anything with Allah. Indeed, associating others with Allah is a great injustice.' And We have enjoined upon humankind to show kindness to their parents..." (QS. Luqman: 13–14).

The verse emphasizes that character education originates within the family environment through exemplary conduct and affectionate communication. Values of empathy and social concern must be instilled from an early age as part of the moral and spiritual responsibilities of parents.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that the development of children's empathy is strongly influenced by parental involvement and the practice of social habituation. Brantasari, (2021) asserts that active paternal involvement significantly enhances children's empathetic sensitivity. Cici & Supriadi, (2024) found that daily charity programs implemented in schools are effective in fostering generosity and social concern. Lestari dkk., (2022) indicate that parental participation in socio-religious activities strengthens children's empathy, independence, and social awareness. Mariam & Prihandoko, (2025) provide evidence that the implementation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) in early childhood education institutions positively impacts children's spiritual and social development. Heldanita, (2018) emphasizes that habituation methods constitute an effective strategy for shaping moral character through repeated experiences. Rahmawati (2021) demonstrates that sharing activities at home, supported by parental involvement, significantly improve children's empathy.

These findings indicate that empathy and social concern can be effectively developed through a combination of habituation practices and parental involvement. However, a

limitation of previous studies lies in their tendency to separate the focus between parental roles and habituation practices based on religious activities. Some studies emphasize the role of parents in isolation, while others concentrate solely on the implementation of charitable activities in schools without examining family involvement in depth. This condition reveals a research gap in studies that simultaneously integrate parental roles and the practice of charitable habituation as a strategy for children's character development.

This study offers novelty by examining, in an integrative manner, the role of parents in the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) as a medium for cultivating empathy and social concern in early childhood. The focus of this research extends beyond the implementation process to include how parental involvement strengthens meaning-making, the internalization of values, and the tangible impact on children's social behavior. This approach contributes a new perspective to the study of character education grounded in Islamic values, emphasizing the synergy between the family environment and educational institutions.

The research context at RA Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha, Central Lampung, indicates that the Friday charity program has been routinely implemented as part of character-building efforts. Preliminary observations reveal behavioral changes among children, including an increased tendency to share, a sense of joy in giving, and a growing concern for peers in need. Nevertheless, challenges persist in the form of suboptimal parental involvement, such as inconsistency in habituating children to bring charitable donations and differing understandings of the value of charity. This phenomenon demonstrates that the success of habituation is not solely dependent on school programs but also on family support.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to strengthen character education models that are not only institution-based but also actively involve the family as the central agent of value formation. This research is essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of how collaboration between parents and schools can more effectively foster empathy and social concern in children. The findings are expected to contribute academically to the development of character education grounded in religious values, while also serving as a practical reference for educators and parents in nurturing a generation that is empathetic, socially aware, and morally upright.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive method (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). This approach was selected because the research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of naturally occurring social phenomena, namely the role of parents in cultivating empathy and social concern in early childhood through the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) at RA Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti. The focus of the study is not directed toward measuring statistical relationships between variables, but rather toward capturing meaning, processes, experiences, and social interactions that emerge in the implementation of the activity. This perspective is consistent with Sugiyono's view that qualitative research is used to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives, emphasizing meaning, process, and context. The descriptive method is applied to ensure that field conditions are portrayed comprehensively as they naturally occur. Moleong explains that descriptive qualitative research aims to describe, interpret, and explain a phenomenon based on data obtained from the field (Moleong & Surjaman, 2014). Through a naturalistic approach, this study is conducted in a natural setting without intervention, allowing the data to genuinely reflect the participants' experiences in the Friday charity activities.

The research was conducted at RA Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti, located in Jayasakti Village, Anak Tuha District, Central Lampung Regency, Lampung Province. This site was selected due to its alignment with the research focus, particularly the existence of a Friday

charity habituation program that has become an integral part of early childhood character development and is supported by parental involvement. The institution is also actively engaged in integrating religious and social values into its educational processes. The study focuses on Group B, consisting of children aged 5–6 years, as children within this age range begin to exhibit more observable social-emotional development and are regularly involved in socio-religious activities. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2025–2026 academic year, encompassing stages of preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. The preparation stage included preliminary studies, obtaining research permits, and developing research instruments. Data collection was carried out through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analysis and reporting stages were conducted progressively, adapting to field conditions and the availability of informants.

The research subjects consisted of individuals directly involved in the Friday charity habituation, including the head of RA Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti, Group B teachers, and parents of Group B students. The principal serving as an informant was Mrs. Yulianti, S.Pd., while the Group B teachers included Mrs. Rahmawati, S.Pd., and Mrs. Bety Fatqur Rahman, S.Pd. Parent informants comprised several guardians who were considered actively supportive of the Friday charity program, namely Mrs. Ma'rifatu Rohmatu Lailie, Mrs. Tuti Mulyani, Mrs. Sugiyanti, Mrs. Novitasari, Mrs. Dian Rofiqoh, and Mrs. Sri Utami. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific considerations. This technique was employed because the selected informants were deemed to possess relevant knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the research focus. In qualitative research, the number of informants is flexible and may expand in accordance with data requirements in the field.

The research data consist of primary and secondary data (Ardiansyah dkk., 2023). Primary data were obtained directly through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and parents regarding the implementation of Friday charity, forms of parental involvement, and its impact on the development of children's empathy and social concern. Secondary data were collected from school documents, activity records, attendance lists, photographs, reference books, and relevant scholarly journals. Data collection techniques included passive participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by observation sheets, interview guidelines, field notes, and documentation tools to ensure a systematic data collection process. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking to ensure that the data accurately reflect the informants' experiences. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing conducted interactively from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study (Miles dkk., 2014). Through this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive description of the role of parents in cultivating empathy and social concern in children through the habituation of Friday charity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Friday Charity Habituation Program at RA Bustanul 'Ulum

Based on the results of an interview with the principal of RA Bustanul 'Ulum, the Friday charity habituation program (*Sedekah Jum'at*) is one of the institution's flagship activities aimed at instilling values of empathy and social concern in children aged 5–6 years. This program has been consistently implemented for approximately four years as an initiative of the Bustanul 'Ulum Development Islamic Boarding School Foundation and is applied across all educational units under its administration (Interview, 2026).



Figure 1. Interview with the Principal

This activity is designed to habituate children to sharing from an early age by practicing the allocation of a portion of their resources to assist others. The collected funds are utilized to support members of the school community in need as well as to finance other social activities. The principal emphasized that the essence of charitable giving lies in the cultivation of empathy and social concern, rather than in the amount of money contributed.

However, in its implementation, several conditions were still observed among children indicating that empathetic values have not yet developed optimally. Some children continue to display egocentric behaviors, such as reluctance to share, limited concern when peers encounter difficulties, and participation in charity activities merely in response to teachers' instructions without fully understanding their meaning. This suggests that the habituation process still requires reinforcement to ensure that empathetic values are genuinely internalized within the children.

In practice, the principal ensures that the activity is conducted regularly, systematically, and in alignment with the objectives of character education. Teachers and staff provide exemplary conduct as behavioral models for the children. The success of the program is also supported by effective collaboration with parents through continuous communication.



Figure 2. Friday Charity Activity (*Sedekah Jum'at*)

Although the activity has been carried out regularly, children's levels of understanding regarding the meaning of charity vary considerably. Some children have demonstrated enthusiasm and an awareness of sharing, while others still perceive the activity merely as a routine without deeper social significance. This condition indicates the need for stronger synergy between the school and parents in providing continuous and meaningful guidance to children.

Based on the implementation of the program, the following section presents the research findings concerning the role of parents in cultivating children's empathy and social concern through the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*).

The Role of Parents in Cultivating Children's Empathy and Social Concern

Based on interviews with Group B teachers, parental involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) implemented at school (Interview, 2026). This is further supported by several parents who stated that support from home helps children participate more consistently in charity activities. However, in practice, variations in the level of parental involvement are still evident and have an impact on the development of children's empathy. Children who receive less reinforcement from their parents tend not to demonstrate consistent empathetic behavior, such as still needing reminders to share, showing limited sensitivity toward peers' conditions, and lacking an understanding of the purpose of charitable activities. Parents not only provide administrative support by preparing charitable contributions but also offer explanations to children regarding the meaning of sharing through communication that is appropriate to the developmental stage of children aged 5–6 years (Interview, 2026).

Teachers observe that children who receive reinforcement from their parents at home exhibit more consistent development of empathy and social concern, such as the ability to understand peers' feelings, share voluntarily without being prompted, and demonstrate helping behaviors. In contrast, children who receive limited parental guidance tend to participate in activities only formally without showing significant behavioral changes. This finding reinforces that the role of parents extends beyond merely providing charity; it encompasses the continuous shaping of children's understanding and social habits.

Teachers also explained that habituation conducted repeatedly at both school and home helps transform the value of sharing into a habitual aspect of children's daily behavior (Interview, 2026). Meanwhile, parents indicated that technical constraints, such as children forgetting to bring charitable contributions, can be addressed through active communication between teachers and parents (Interview, 2026).

Although technical challenges such as children forgetting to bring donations may occur, these issues can be mitigated through effective communication between teachers and parents. Sustained collaboration between the school and the family thus becomes a key factor in maintaining the consistency of habituation practices and strengthening children's social-emotional development.

The Impact of Friday Charity Habituation on Children's Empathy and Social Concern

Based on interviews with the principal of RA Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti, the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) has a positive impact on the development of empathy and social concern among children aged 5–6 years (Interview, 2026). Similar findings were also reported by Group B teachers (Interview, 2026). Parents likewise indicated observable behavioral changes, with children demonstrating increased care and a greater willingness to share at home (Interview, 2026). Nevertheless, the impact varies across individuals. Some children have shown well-developed empathy, such as the ability to share voluntarily, help peers, and understand others' feelings. However, there are still children whose empathetic development remains suboptimal, as reflected in indifferent attitudes toward peers or sharing only when prompted. The routine implementation of this activity serves as a concrete medium through which children can practice sharing and helping behaviors.

Teachers observed an increase in prosocial behaviors in the classroom, including helping attitudes and an awareness of sharing without the need for constant reminders. Parents also reported similar changes at home, indicating that the values acquired at school are transferred into the family environment. These findings suggest that the habituation of Friday charity has a positive impact; however, its effectiveness is highly influenced by the consistency of the habituation process and the support of the surrounding environment, particularly the role of parents in reinforcing these values at home.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Based on interviews with the principal, the primary supporting factors in the implementation of the Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) activity include institutional policy support and a strong commitment to maintaining program consistency (Interview, 2026). Group B teachers reported that the exemplary conduct of teachers and school staff, along with effective communication between the school and families through class-based social media platforms, serve as important supporting factors in reinforcing the habituation of empathy and social concern among children (Interview, 2026). Meanwhile, parents also indicated that support from the family contributes to maintaining the consistency of the program's implementation (Interview, 2026).

The inhibiting factors, however, are not solely technical in nature but are also related to children's developmental conditions. Some children continue to exhibit egocentric tendencies, have limited understanding of the meaning of sharing, and are not yet accustomed to demonstrating spontaneous concern for others. In addition, insufficient reinforcement from the family environment also contributes to the suboptimal development of children's empathy (Interview, 2026).

Forms of Parental Roles in the Habituation of Friday Charity

The findings of this study indicate that parents play a role in providing examples of sharing behavior, reminding children to bring charitable contributions, explaining the meaning of charity, and reinforcing empathetic behavior at home. These findings are reflected in children's behaviors, as they begin to imitate parental habits, such as sharing food, helping peers, and demonstrating concern for others. However, among children who receive limited modeling from parents, such behaviors have not yet emerged consistently and still require guidance.

This condition highlights that the family, as the primary environment, holds a crucial role in the formation of children's character. In line with Gunarsa's view, children's moral and social values are shaped through direct interaction with their parents. Within the context of this study, such interactions have been shown to influence children's ability to understand and practice empathy. Therefore, when parents actively provide guidance and serve as role models, the process of internalizing empathetic values becomes more effective (Albab & Rohmah, 2023).

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with Lickona's theory of character education, which emphasizes that moral development encompasses three aspects: moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral action. Among children who receive parental guidance, these three aspects begin to develop—children understand the importance of sharing, develop concern for others, and practice it through concrete actions such as charitable giving. Conversely, for children who receive less reinforcement, the development of these aspects remains suboptimal. In this study, parents not only provide knowledge about the importance of sharing but also cultivate a sense of care and encourage its practical application through charitable activities.

Parental Strategies in Cultivating Empathy through Habituation

The study found that parents do not merely instruct children to bring charitable contributions but also provide simple explanations regarding the reasons for sharing and the benefits of helping others. This strategy appears effective among children who are able to understand the meaning of charity, as reflected in their willingness to share voluntarily and the emergence of a sense of joy when helping others. However, for some children, charitable activities are still perceived as routine practices without deeper meaning, resulting in the limited development of empathetic behavior.

This strategy aligns with the concept of habituation in Islamic education as proposed by Al-Ghazali, who emphasizes that moral character is formed through continuous practice

and repetition of good behavior. With regular weekly repetition and reinforcement at home, the value of empathy does not remain a ceremonial activity but gradually develops into a habit (Yusuf dkk., 2023). These findings indicate that habituation requires consistent repetition and reinforcement. This is consistent with Al-Ghazali's perspective on habituation in Islamic education, which asserts that moral character is shaped through sustained and continuous practice (Zahrani dkk., 2026). In this study, the repetition of weekly charitable activities, accompanied by parental explanations, has been shown to assist some children in internalizing empathetic values. The habituation of Friday charity thus serves as a concrete medium that enables children to understand empathy through real actions rather than merely as an abstract concept.

The Impact of Parental Roles on the Development of Children's Empathy and Social Concern

Based on the results of observations and interviews, children who receive active guidance from their parents demonstrate better development of empathy, such as sharing voluntarily, helping peers, and showing concern for others. However, the findings also indicate that some children have not yet exhibited optimal development, as reflected in indifferent attitudes or sharing only when prompted. This reinforces the notion that the development of empathy is gradual and is strongly influenced by the immediate environment, particularly the family.

These findings are consistent with Hoffman's theory of empathy development, which explains that empathy emerges when children are able to understand others' emotions and respond with concern. In this study, such abilities begin to appear in children who receive reinforcement from their parents, while others remain at the early stages of empathetic development (Saipullah & Yusuf, 2025). Furthermore, in line with Hurlock's perspective, children aged 5–6 years are in a stage of social development where they begin to understand others' feelings, yet still require guidance to express these feelings through concrete actions. This is evident in the findings, where not all children automatically demonstrate empathetic behavior without guidance.

Additionally, these findings are in accordance with Santrock's view that parenting patterns characterized by guidance, communication, and emotional support promote the development of positive social behavior in children (Ikmila dkk., 2024). Within the context of this study, parental involvement has been shown to strengthen the consistency between values taught at school and those practiced at home, thereby fostering more stable development of children's empathy.

The Position of Parental Roles as a Dominant Factor in the Habituation of Friday Charity

Although the school facilitates the implementation of the Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) program, the findings indicate that the school's role primarily functions as a mediator and coordinator of the activity. In contrast, the internalization of empathetic values in children predominantly occurs through interactions within the family environment. This is evident from the significant behavioral differences observed between children who receive parental guidance and those who do not.

These findings affirm that, in the absence of parental involvement, charitable activities risk becoming mere routines without meaningful impact for children. Conversely, active parental engagement enables such activities to foster deeper understanding, attitudes, and empathetic behaviors (Rohmat dkk., 2024). Therefore, it can be concluded that the habituation of Friday charity will be effective in nurturing children's empathy and social concern when there is synergy between the school and parents. However, within the context of this study, parental involvement emerges as the more dominant factor, as it directly influences the process of value internalization in children's daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the role of parents in cultivating empathy and social concern among children aged 5–6 years through the habituation of Friday charity (*Sedekah Jum'at*) is manifested through exemplary behavior in sharing, providing understanding of the meaning of charity, offering emotional support, and consistently reinforcing values within the family environment. This role has been proven to be a dominant factor influencing the development of children's empathy, particularly in addressing egocentric tendencies and low levels of social concern that are still observed among some early childhood learners. The routine implementation of Friday charity activities provides children with concrete experiences to understand and practice sharing behavior in their daily lives. The findings also reveal that not all children automatically achieve optimal empathetic development. Children who do not receive reinforcement from their parents tend to perceive charity merely as a routine rather than as an expression of social concern. In contrast, children who receive active parental guidance demonstrate a better understanding of the meaning of sharing. The alignment between habituation at school and reinforcement at home plays a crucial role in fostering the stable and sustainable growth of empathetic values. Behavioral changes are reflected in increased caring attitudes, improved cooperation, and greater sensitivity to peers' feelings, although such development occurs gradually and varies among children.

This study has important practical and theoretical implications for early childhood education. Active parental involvement emerges as a key factor in the success of character habituation, indicating that educational institutions need to design programs that not only focus on school-based activities but also actively involve parents through intensive communication and sustained collaboration. Teachers are expected to develop contextual, experience-based learning approaches that enable children to understand and practice empathy in real-life situations. Parents, in turn, should provide consistent role modeling and emotional support, as children tend to imitate behaviors observed in their daily environments. From a theoretical perspective, this study affirms that habituation through social and religious activities constitutes a relevant approach to developing the social-emotional domain of early childhood. These findings may serve as a reference for the advancement of character education based on experiential learning and collaboration between families and schools. Therefore, schools are encouraged to continuously develop innovative and sustainable habituation programs, teachers to implement varied instructional methods, parents to cultivate consistent sharing practices, and future researchers to expand the scope of studies in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of empathy development in early childhood.

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