

Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values in Developing Independent Character

*Ikhwanul Abrori¹, Tobroni², Romelah³, Afiful Ikhwan⁴

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Jl. Raya Tlogomas No.246,
Malang, East Java, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Jl. Budi Utomo No.10,
Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia

*ikhwanulabrori73@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *This study explores the strengthening of Islamic Religious Education values at the Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Ponorogo Child Welfare Institution (LKSA NAD) in developing foster children's independence. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documents. Validity was tested by triangulation, and data analysis was carried out using the Miles interactive model, including collection, condensation, presentation, and conclusion. Strengthening the values of Islamic Education (PAI) at LKSA NAD plays a vital role in developing the character of independence of foster children. Strengthening the values of PAI at LKSA NAD is carried out through material, habituation, and lectures. Strengthening the material includes memorisation of the qur'an, interpretation, the qur'an and hadith, aqidah akhlaq, fiqh, and imla, qira'ah (recitation), arabic language learning, muhadarah (speech), al-Islam and Muhammadiyah, tartil reading the qur'an. Habituation is carried out through activities at the Ramadhan short-term boarding school, obligatory and sunnah worship, while lectures are given in religious study (kajian). This program has successfully increased foster children's independence, especially in making independent decisions, understanding moral values, and preparing themselves professionally with Islamic ethics. Foster children realise the benefits of this program in facing independent life in the future, although it was initially challenging. Materials such as memorising the qur'an, aqidah akhlaq, fiqh, and muhadarah are essential in strengthening PAI values. This study shows that strengthening Islamic Education values significantly contributes to increasing foster children's independence through Islamic ethics and responsible decision-making skills.*

Penelitian ini membahas tentang penguatan nilai-nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam di Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak Nyai Ahmad Dahlan (LKSA NAD) Ponorogo dalam mengembangkan kemandirian anak asuh. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi kasus, pengumpulan

¹  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0009-0000-5949-7259>

²  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0009-0002-0323-2889>

³  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1099-7169>

⁴  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6412-3830>

data dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumen; Uji validitas data dilakukan dengan triangulasi, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan dengan model interaktif Miles yang meliputi pengumpulan, kondensasi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Penguatan nilai-nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di LKSA NAD berperan penting dalam mengembangkan karakter kemandirian anak asuh. Penguatan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam di LKSA NAD dilakukan melalui materi, pembiasaan, dan ceramah. Penguatan materi meliputi hafalan al-qur'an, tafsir, qur'an hadits, *aqidah akhlaq*, *fiqih*, dan *imla'*, *qira'ah*, pembelajaran bahasa arab, *muhadarah*, al-Islam dan kemuhammadiyah, *tartil* baca al-qur'an. Pembiasaan dilakukan melalui kegiatan di pondok pesantren ramadhan, ibadah wajib dan sunah, sedangkan ceramah melalui kajian agama terjadwal. Program ini berhasil meningkatkan kemandirian anak asuh, terutama dalam mengambil keputusan secara mandiri, memahami nilai-nilai moral, dan mempersiapkan diri secara profesional dengan etika Islam. Anak asuh menyadari manfaat program ini dalam menghadapi kehidupan mandiri di masa depan, meskipun awalnya sulit. Materi-materi seperti hafalan al-qur'an, *aqidah akhlaq*, *fiqih*, dan *muhadarah* sangat penting dalam penguatan nilai-nilai PAI. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penguatan nilai-nilai PAI memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap peningkatan kemandirian anak asuh melalui etika Islam dan keterampilan mengambil keputusan yang bertanggung jawab.

Keywords: *Strengthening, Islamic Education, Values, Independent Character.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Independence, in the Islamic perspective, is the ability of a Muslim not to depend on others, especially in earning a living (Maya, 2015; Wibowo et al., 2022). Independence includes moral and spiritual aspects, including controlling emotions and behaviour to overcome problems without the help of others (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). This responsibility for independence begins to apply when children reach puberty and are required to carry out Islamic teachings (Bobyleva, 2021; Ismail et al., 2016; Maswikwa et al., 2015). As social beings, humans must have independence and make the right decisions to solve problems (Akram et al., 2015; Kruahong et al., 2023).

Emphasis on independence in children, especially when children are required to pray at the age of 13 or the adolescent phase, which is a crucial phase, namely the transition to adulthood, where adolescents build identity and independence (Brandenberger, 2023; Geary & Xu, 2022; Hanif Cahyo Adi Kistoro et al., 2023; Martin et al., 2014). This process sometimes causes conflict with parents when adolescents try to reduce childhood dependence (Steinberg, 2017).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a role as a planned effort to instil Islamic values in children, covering the dimensions of religious life so that they know, understand, live, believe, and are pious and have noble morals (An et al., 2024; Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019; Niyozov & Memon, 2020). Islamic Religious Education, in a broad sense, has a crucial role in shaping children's behaviour, character, and intellectuality to create

humans who are helpful to themselves and others by implementing Islamic teachings in relationships with fellow humans and Allah SWT (Alirahman et al., 2023; Fiore, 2021; Niyozov & Memon, 2020). The Qur'an and Hadith are the main foundations of PAI, which, although developed through various sources of Islamic law, remain the main guidelines for facing the complexities of the times (Ahmad, 2019; Memon, 2016; Niyozov & Memon, 2020; Osman, 2019).

Children living in Child Welfare Institutions (LKSA) often come from neglected backgrounds, including weak economic factors, broken families, or loss of parents (Jiménez-Morago et al., 2015; Moretti et al., 2024). According to Law Number 35 of 2014, children whose social, physical, or mental needs are not met are categorised as neglected children (Apriatin et al., 2016). They face challenges obtaining education and proper housing, negatively impacting their emotional and cognitive development (Chawla, 2020; Shinsky, 2021). In addition, differences in background often trigger conflicts among children. Limited funding worsens the conditions of education and other basic needs (Akram et al., 2015; Bernedo Muñoz et al., 2022; Kruahong et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2016).

Children in LKSA are thought to be more adaptable than children who live with their parents (Hailegiorgis et al., 2018). Unfortunately, some LKSA officials exploit children for personal gain, which can lower their morale and self-esteem (Muda et al., 2024; Nhep et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential to develop the independent character of children in LKSA so that they can grow into independent individuals despite limitations (Hailegiorgis et al., 2018; Sevilla-Santo et al., 2021; Sosial, n.d.). In order to build the independent character of children in Child Welfare Institutions (LKSA), institutions need to develop independence support programs.

Independence is a character that foster children at LKSA Nyai Ahmad Dahlan (NAD) Ponorogo must have. Regarding material, LKSA NAD strives to develop and foster children's independence through various initiatives. One of the efforts was to establish a mini-market charity called NAD Mart, which is managed by the management and foster children. In 2021, LKSA NAD Ponorogo received assistance in the form of 10 sewing machines and two overlock machines from the Kartini Temanggung Center for Social Rehabilitation of People with Intellectual Disabilities (BBRSPDI) as a facility to improve the ability of foster children to develop their independence.

Although LKSA NAD Ponorogo has succeeded in developing the independence of foster children from the material aspect through initiatives such as the establishment of NAD Mart and the provision of sewing machines, there is still a gap in terms of strengthening independence from the spiritual aspect through the values of Islamic Religious Education. This study will focus on how LKSA implements the values of Islamic Religious Education in developing the character of foster children's independence, as well as the implications resulting from this approach.

Strengthening Islamic Religious Education's (PAI) values in developing independent character can be integrated with the Operant Conditioning theory proposed by Skinner. According to this theory, student behaviour can be formed through the provision of reinforcement, both positive and negative, which gradually forms positive habits. This reinforcement is essential to trigger repeated responses that ultimately lead to forming an independent character. Skinner also emphasised that punishment is not practical in the long term in shaping behaviour, but reinforcement is better for creating desired

behavioural changes (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Imelda, 2018; Pelaez & Monlux, 2017).

Previous studies have discussed the strengthening of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in various educational contexts, such as in universities (Fihris et al., 2023), madrasahs (Claude Ah-Teck & E. Starr, 2014; Ihsan, 2016), public schools through *Rohis* activities (Adela & Ritonga, 2023), and the concept of full-day school (Benawa et al., 2018). However, these studies mainly focus on developing religiosity and character through extracurricular activities, intensive teaching, or the management of structured teaching and learning activities. This research emphasises cognitive aspects and formal worship practices such as Qur'an Recitation, prayer, and teaching the Qur'an without delving deeper into how PAI is applied in specific contexts, such as orphanages with different social dynamics and character development.

The current study attempts to bridge this gap by focusing on how strengthening Islamic Religious Education values can develop and foster children's independence in LKSA. Previously, studies such as those conducted by Karim and Kosim emphasised the importance of strengthening spiritual-based character in boarding schools and the integration of Islamic values in learning (Karim, 2020; Kosim, 2020). However, few studies have explored the influence of strengthening Islamic religious education values on the development of the independent character of foster children in orphanages. Therefore, this study will provide a new perspective on how the spiritual aspect of Islamic Religious Education can contribute to developing more holistic independence in foster children in LKSA, especially in the complex social context of orphanages.

This study aims to describe in depth the implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education values in developing the character of independence at LKSA NAD Ponorogo. In addition, this study also aims to reveal the implications of developing the character of independence of foster children in the institution. By studying these two aspects, the study is expected to provide insight into the implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education values in forming independence and its impacts on foster children at LKSA NAD Ponorogo.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach; the aim is to describe the strengthening of PAI values in LKSA NAD Ponorogo in developing the character of independence of foster children, allowing researchers to gain an in-depth understanding and develop theories (Hamilton & Finley, 2019; Weyant, 2022). Case studies in the context of LKSA NAD Ponorogo use descriptive-exploratory and descriptive-explanatory strategies to explore PAI values and the development of the character of independence of foster children (Neuman, 2014; Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Yin, 2015). In this study, the constructivism paradigm is used to understand the subjective interpretations of participants regarding the strengthening of PAI values and the development of the character of independence in LKSA NAD Ponorogo (Gioia, 2021; Matta, 2022; Sławecki, 2018; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This research was conducted at the Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Ponorogo Children's Social Welfare Institution (LKSA NAD). LKSA NAD Ponorogo was chosen as the research location because of its accessibility, the existence of NAD Mart, and the provision of sewing machines to develop foster children's independence. All foster children at the LKSA are female, although the Muhammadiyah Ponorogo Youth Branch Leadership manages them.

The subjects of this study involved administrators, caregivers, and foster children of LKSA NAD Ponorogo to collect information on strengthening PAI values in developing independent character. Informants were selected purposively, focusing on policies and implementation of parenting programs (Gioia, 2021; Islam et al., 2022). The data sources in this study are divided into two parts: primary and secondary. Primary sources include interviews and direct observations of administrators, caregivers, and foster children of LKSA NAD Ponorogo, focusing on strengthening PAI values and independent character (Neuman, 2014; Sławecki, 2018). Secondary data were obtained from written documents and photographs (Ikhwan, 2020).

This study used three data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to observe the activities of foster children at LKSA NAD Ponorogo, especially in strengthening PAI values and developing independent character. Structured interviews involved administrators, caregivers, and foster children to gather information about policies and program implementation. The documentation technique complements the two previous techniques by collecting written data related to the history, vision, mission, and programs of LKSA NAD. These three techniques ensure comprehensive and credible data (Hamilton & Finley, 2019; Neuman, 2014).

The validity of the data in this study was tested through triangulation, which involves multiple sources for data verification and comparison (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). There are three types of triangulation: 1) Source triangulation, comparing data from administrators, caregivers, and foster children to understand differences in perspective; 2) Technique triangulation, which compares data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure credibility; 3) Time triangulation, which collects data at different times to increase the validity of the information (Ikhwan, 2020).

In this study, data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which includes four steps. First, data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation to analyse the activities of foster children at LKSA NAD Ponorogo, especially those related to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values and the character of independence. Structured interviews involved administrators, caregivers, and foster children, while documentation provided information about the institution's history, vision, and mission. Furthermore, the data was condensed by sorting important information and identifying the main themes. After that, the data was presented in an organised form, such as tables or narratives that describe the activities and views from the interviews. Finally, the researchers concluded the integration of PAI values and the program's effectiveness and conducted verification to ensure data consistency from the three collection techniques used, thus producing a deep understanding (Miles et al., 2014).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values in Developing Independent Character

The development of independent character in the Child Welfare Institution (LKSA) NAD Ponorogo is based on the institution's vision as an alternative to good care, with a mission to provide education, skills, and entrepreneurship. Administrator 1 emphasises that Islamic values strengthen the independence of foster children to prevent

independence without direction. Administrator 2 adds that the built character is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith so that their independence becomes strong and has character. Caregiver 1 agrees that religious guidelines help children avoid negative influences.

The values of Islamic religious education at LKSA NAD are strengthened through materials, habits, and religious studies. Some of the materials used to strengthen the values of Islamic religious education include:

Memorising the Qur'an

In developing the independent character of foster children at LKSA NAD, strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) begins with memorising the Al-Qur'an as the main guideline. Administrator 1 emphasises the importance of the Qur'an in providing direction in life, where Surah *Ar-Rad* verse 11 is taught to foster awareness that a person's fate is determined by his efforts. Children are also directed to memorise at least three *juz* of the Koran, including surahs Al-Mulk, Al-*Waqiah*, and Ar-Rahman, which have advantages. They also memorise important verses, such as the first five verses, the last two verses of Surah Al-Baqarah, and the *Ayat Kursi*. Memorising the Qur'an provides calm and helps children's decision-making; it is hoped that it can protect them from worldly and spiritual disturbances and strengthen their character.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values through memorising the Qur'an was carried out after the *Fajr* prayer, with foster children divided into three classes based on their formal education level. The class was divided into groups based on memorisation ability, and the memorisation process began with a joint prayer. Administrator 1 acted as a mentor, listening to the memorisation submission and providing an assessment with a voice code if there were any mistakes. Children with fluent memorisation could help their friends. At the end of the learning, reflection and memorisation preparation for the next meeting were carried out. The learning was closed with a joint prayer, and foster children were asked to read the translation of verses related to independence before returning to their respective activities.

Interpretation of the Qur'an

The second material is the interpretation of the Qur'an, which aims to understand the meaning and content of the Qur'an, especially the verses that are difficult to understand. Muslims need to have knowledge and references when interpreting obscure verses. Interpretation helps foster children understand the values of the Qur'an, making it a more profound guide to life. The material taught includes short surahs in the 30th *juz*, including interpretations that motivate foster children's independence, such as in Surah *Ar-Rad* verse 11. Learning does not only focus on memorisation but also on understanding the meaning and interpretation, which is very useful for those interested in *da'wah* (Islamic preaching). Foster children admit that knowledge of interpretation makes them more comfortable memorising and understanding the Qur'an, a valuable provision in their lives.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values with interpretation studies in LKSA is carried out according to the schedule of each class after Maghrib to *Isha* prayers. Class A studies every Tuesday night, class B Thursday night, and class C Monday night. Each class is taught the interpretation of the *Juz 'Amma* surah or motivational verses. Learning begins with the students reading the surah, followed by the teacher interpreting verses (administrator 1). Students are asked to repeat until they understand. While

waiting for the teacher, some students read or write in books. The activity ends before the *Isha* prayer with a closing prayer and motivation. On Friday night, learning is carried out simultaneously for all classes with an external teacher, discussing surahs related to worship, motivation, and independence. The learning atmosphere runs smoothly until the *Isha* call to prayer.

Al-Quran and Hadith

The third material is the Qur'an and Hadith, which are the main guidelines for Muslims that complement each other. Foster children are taught the basics of the science of the Qur'an, such as the history of the collection of verses and *asbabun nuzul* (the reasons for the revelation of verses), as well as the virtues of studying and teaching the Qur'an. Motivation is given to become "the best of people" by studying and teaching the Qur'an, regardless of social status. In learning Hadith, foster children learn the *Matan, Sanad*, and status of Hadith and can distinguish between authentic, weak, and false Hadith. They are also taught surahs and hadiths supporting independence, such as Surah Al-Mulk and Hadith, which teach that "the upper hand is better than the lower hand," encouraging them to live independently and help others. The Qur'an and Hadith are considered important life guidelines for salvation in this world and the hereafter.

The implementation of strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through learning the Qur'an and Hadith is arranged according to a schedule, with class A studying on Monday night, class B on Tuesday night, and class C on Thursday night. Learning begins after the Maghrib prayer in the congregation. In class A, the material taught includes the basics of the Qur'an and Hadith. In class B, the lesson is a continuation of class A, while class C focuses on applying the concepts of the Qur'an and Hadith in everyday life, such as motivation and independence. Learning involves repeating the material to ensure student understanding, especially on onerous terms. Before the learning is closed, administrator 1 reads verses of the Qur'an or Hadith related to independence. Learning ends with *Isha's* call to prayer, which is closed with *hamdalah* and prayer together.

Hadith

The fourth material is Hadith, the second source of Islamic law after the Qur'an, which provides a more in-depth explanation of the teachings of the Qur'an, including the procedures for prayer. Foster children are given an understanding of the various statuses of Hadith so that they do not carelessly use Hadith as evidence. The focus of learning Hadith at LKSA NAD is to build independent character by emphasizing the value that "the upper hand is better than the lower hand" to teach the importance of giving rather than just receiving. The hadiths taught include the implementation of worship, the sunnah of the Prophet, daily practices, and life motivation. Foster children feel that learning Hadith is very important because it teaches correct worship and the characteristics of the Prophet that can be emulated and provides life motivation, as conveyed by several foster children regarding the benefits of studying Hadith.

Implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values through learning Hadith in three classes with different schedules but at the same time, namely after Maghrib prayer until before *Isha* prayer. Class A studies every Thursday night, class B every Monday night, and class C every Tuesday night. Learning begins with preparation, which includes interaction between the instructor (administrator 1) and students, who take notes, read, and discuss. Hadith material includes worship teachings, the Prophet's sunnah, and independence. Activities run orderly, with discussions more

dominant in class C. Learning is closed with Hadith related to independence, reviewing material, and giving assignments. Before the *Isha* prayer, learning ends with a closing prayer for the assembly, and then students prepare to perform congregational prayers.

Aqidah Akhlaq

The fifth material is *Aqidah Akhlaq* in LKSA NAD, which is the main foundation in the formation of the personality of foster children. They are taught to have the right faith and to avoid acts of shirk and heresy. The morals taught are guided by the example of the Prophet, where foster children are directed to imitate the attitudes and behaviour of the Prophet by the Qur'an. The learning of faith and morals aims to strengthen the piety and independence of foster children in living their lives, both in the orphanage environment and when they are adults. Thus, it is hoped that foster children will live a life of noble morals, be independent, and be far from actions prohibited by religion.

The implementation of strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) with the material of *Aqidah Akhlaq* in LKSA NAD was carried out after the *Asr* prayer on different days for each class. Classes A and B took place on Tuesday, while class C took place on Thursday. The learning process began with children forming a circle in the prayer room, memorising *Juz 'Amma*, reading notes, or discussing with friends. Administrator 1 then guided them with the material on the morals of the Prophet, which emphasised the character of independence. The children listened, answered questions, and discussed. In class C, when administrator 1 could not attend, the class leader led the discussion smoothly. Before closing, administrator 1 read examples of the Prophet's morals related to independence, and the children were asked to repeat the material. The learning was closed with *hamdallah* and prayer, teaching the importance of not depending on others.

Fiqh

The sixth *fiqh* material taught to foster children includes understanding differences of opinion in worship, especially the four primary schools of thought: *Shafi'i*, Hanafi, Maliki, and *Hambali*. The goal is for foster children to understand and act maturely towards these differences without criticising or feeling the most correct. Administrator 1 emphasises the importance of tolerance and that differences in *Fiqh* in society are common and should not trigger division. Foster children are taught to live in harmony and mix with Muslims who have different understandings of *Fiqh*, supporting the development of their independence. According to foster child 3, learning *Fiqh* helps them understand the procedures for worship and what is and is not allowed.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values with *fiqh* material is carried out at different times according to class, with classes A and B studying on Thursday afternoon and class C on Tuesday afternoon. The activity begins after the *Asr* or *Isha* prayer, with students gathering in the prayer room, bringing their learning equipment, and waiting for the teacher (administrator 1), who opens the lesson with a greeting. In the learning process, administrator 1 provides *fiqh* material related to independence and often asks questions to measure student understanding. If questions cannot be answered correctly, the material is repeated until understood. Learning ends with a closing prayer for the assembly, and students leave the prayer room in an orderly fashion. The closing of learning is always accompanied by reinforcement of the message of independence so that students do not depend on others. This method is effective, with an orderly atmosphere and active participation of students in answering questions and listening to the material presented.

Imla (Dictation)

The seventh material of *Imla* in LKSA NAD is an important lesson that trains foster children to write and understand Arabic correctly. *Imla* teaches them how to write, read, and pronounce Arabic letters, correct mistakes, and understand changes in meaning due to changes in harakat. Administrator 1 explains that this learning develops three aspects: cognitive (knowledge of Arabic writing theory), affective (pronouncing and writing well), and psychomotor (using the senses and hand movements). *Imla* also trains foster children's concentration when listening and writing. In addition, pearls of wisdom such as "*man jadda wa jada*" motivate them and instil independence and a spirit of learning.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values with *Imla* material in LKSA NAD is carried out every Saturday afternoon after *Asr* prayer for classes A, B, and C. Learning begins with children gathering in the prayer room, listening to caregiver 1, who opens the lesson with greetings and bismillah. Children listen to Arabic sentences spoken by caregiver 1, then copy them repeatedly. During the process, class C understands and completes the task faster, while classes A and B still struggle, often turning to friends to find answers. Nevertheless, all the children managed to complete their tasks. Before closing, caregiver 1 reads a hadith about independence and the children are asked to write it to foster an attitude of not depending on others. Learning ends with *hamdalah* and closing prayers of the assembly, and assignments will be checked at the next meeting.

Qira'ah (Recitation)

The eighth material, *Qira'ah*, is taught to foster children to train their ability to read the Qur'an, prepare them to become imams for congregational prayers or fill official events with the recitation of divine words. In addition, they are also taught to read the translation of the Qur'an in a poetic tone so that the audience is not only impressed by the beautiful reading but also understands its meaning. The main goal is to train the children's confidence when appearing in public, either as an imam or a host. This learning improves reading skills and provides peace of mind for foster children, especially those talented in vocal arts.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values through *qira'ah* practices at LKSA NAD is carried out routinely twice a week, namely Wednesday night and Sunday afternoon, according to the set schedule. This activity involves foster children who gather in the prayer room after congregational prayers, with an orderly atmosphere even though sometimes there is a little noise. Caregiver 1 begins the lesson by reciting verses from *juz 'Amma*, which the children follow. The verses are repeated until they can recite them correctly. Each child gets a turn to recite verses individually according to their class level. This activity aims to strengthen and foster children's values of independence and motivation. The lesson is closed with the recitation of *hamdalah* and the closing prayer of the assembly before the children continue their activities.

Arabic Language Learning

The ninth material, namely learning Arabic at LKSA, aims to enable children to understand the Qur'an because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. A slight difference in pronunciation or writing of Arabic letters can change meaning. Therefore, mastering Arabic is very important to understand the contents of the Qur'an. This language is also practised in daily conversations at LKSA so that children feel more confident when interacting in society, especially with graduates of Islamic boarding schools. In addition,

the main goal of learning is so that the Qur'an is not only read but its meaning is understood. Children enjoy learning Arabic and consider it essential to understand the Qur'an.

The implementation of strengthening PAI values through Arabic language learning at LKSA NAD was carried out according to schedule, with classes A and B on Wednesday afternoon and class C on Monday afternoon. Learning began after the *Asr* prayer, with children sitting together in the prayer room. Caregiver 1 opened the activity with a greeting, took attendance of the children, and started the material with *basmalah*. The material was repeated until all children understood it. The children were enthusiastic, paid attention, wrote, and asked questions if they were unclear. Caregiver 1 used the question-and-answer method and repetition to ensure understanding. Before closing the learning process, caregiver 1 motivated the children to learn the importance of Arabic in reading the verses of the Qur'an. The activity was closed with *hamdalah* and prayer, after which the children dispersed to their respective rooms or the orphanage yard.

Muhadarah (Speech)

The tenth material is *muhadarah*, which trains foster children to dare to convey ideas, especially in Islamic lectures publicly. The main goal is to build self-confidence when speaking in front of the public. Administrator 1 emphasises the importance of the ability to convey opinions, like a gem that is worthless if buried. Children are taught the sequence of lectures, starting with greetings, praise, blessings, and verses of piety, followed by the delivery of material, and closing with *hamdalah*. Administrator 1 emphasises not being nervous and the importance of opening greetings. Children are advised not to read the text to be more natural, with a little joke if necessary. According to CHILD 5, this material is beneficial for public speaking skills.

This study shows the implementation of strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through *muhadarah* activities carried out every Sunday night in the prayer room. This activity involves children in grades A, B, and C with the theme of motivation for independent living. The *muhadarah* process begins after the Maghrib prayer, with children taking turns appearing on the prayer room pulpit. Caregiver 1 begins with greetings, bismillah, and a brief explanation of the material; then, the children come forward to practice public speaking. Caregiver 1 guides them, especially those who seem hesitant, and provides corrections if there are mistakes in conveying verses or hadiths. The learning atmosphere is interactive and full of jokes, where caregiver 1 provides input after each performance. This activity ends with a general explanation of public speaking techniques and a closing prayer before the children continue their activities.

Al Islam and Muhammadiyah

The eleventh material is understanding Al Islam and Muhammadiyah, which are taught in orphanages. First, the study of Surah Al-*Ma'un* teaches the importance of social charity, criticising people who only focus on rituals without caring about others. Administrator 2 emphasises that Ahmad Dahlan taught Al-*Ma'un* to be practised daily. Al-*Ma'un* theology is the basis of the Muhammadiyah movement, which prioritises social empowerment and poverty alleviation. Second, studying the *Tarjih* decision provides an understanding of the problems of *fiqh* and *khilafiyah* so that children can face differences of opinion without causing division. The *Tarjih* decision also covers classic and recent problems, such as determining the beginning of the month of Ramadan and the time for *Fajr* prayer.

They were strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in LKSA NAD under the auspices of Muhammadiyah through the study of Surah Al-*Ma'un* and the *Tarjih* decision. The Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership (PCM) Ponorogo and the *Tarjih* Council implemented the study with an adjusted schedule. The activity began with an introduction to the material and ended with relevant advice to the children. Observations showed that the children actively participated in the study, showed high attention without interruption, and were involved in questions and answers. Each session ended with a prayer and the recitation of *hamdalah*, creating a family atmosphere and discipline. Through this activity, it is hoped that children can understand the values of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah and apply them in everyday life.

Tartil Reading the Qur'an

The twelfth material is the ability to read the Qur'an in *tartil* so that they are ready to appear independently in community activities that require reading the Qur'an, such as in religious celebrations. Children are also taught prayer readings and asked to understand their meaning to achieve solemnity.

They are improving the implementation of reading the Qur'an *tartil* and prayer guided by caregiver 1 with theoretical and practical methods. Children are grouped by class. In class A, reading is done in *sorogan*, where each child reads in front of a caregiver who provides corrections. More proficient friends teach children who are not yet able to read. In class B, many children can read and make corrections independently, with caregivers providing codes if there are mistakes. Class C is relatively proficient and helps each other correct their friends' readings. For prayer readings, class A focuses on memorising and recognising the readings, while class B has begun to memorise the meaning. Prayer activities are carried out with movements guided by caregivers and seniors. All students show enthusiasm and help each other to improve their reading and understanding. Strengthening islamic religious education values through islamic religious education materials is shown in Figure 1.

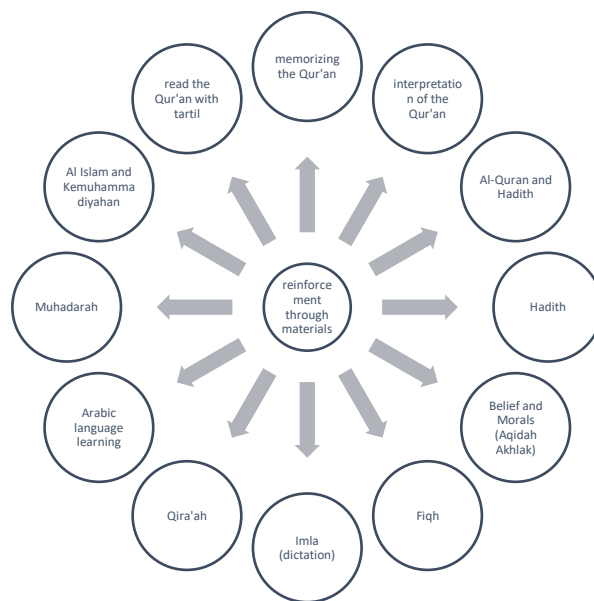


Figure 1. *Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values Through Islamic Religious Education Materials*

Table 1. *Schedule of Activities for Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values through Materials*

Day	Time	Material	Class	Information
Monday	After Maghrib Prayer	Al-Quran and Hadith	C	Learn the basics of the Qur'an and Hadith; the material includes the application of concepts in everyday life.
		Interpretation of the Qur'an	A	Surah reading and verse interpretation ends with a closing prayer.
Tuesday	After Maghrib Prayer	Al-Quran and Hadith	A	Learn the basics of the Qur'an and Hadith; repetition of material for student understanding.
		Interpretation of the Qur'an	B	Surah reading and verse interpretation ends with a closing prayer.
	After Asr Prayer	<i>Aqidah Akhlak</i> (Belief and Morals)	A, B	Discussion of the Prophet's morals and character of independence taught the exemplary attitude of the Prophet.
		<i>Fiqh</i>	C	Learning about differences of opinion in worship, emphasising tolerance between sects.
Wednesday				(No activity)
Thursday	After Maghrib Prayer	Al-Quran and Hadith	B	Advanced lessons from Class A focus on applying concepts to everyday life.
		Interpretation of the Qur'an	C	Surah reading and verse interpretation ends with a closing prayer.
	After Asr Prayer	<i>Aqidah Akhlak</i> (Belief and Morals)	C	Discussion about the morals of the Prophet and the attitude of independence.
		<i>Fiqh</i>	A, B	Discussion of Islamic law from the perspective of the schools of thought; asking questions to gauge student understanding.
Friday	After Maghrib Prayer	Interpretation of the Qur'an	All class	Simultaneous learning with external teachers; discussing worship, motivation, and independence surahs.
Saturday	After Asr Prayer	<i>Imla</i>	All class	Learning to write and understand Arabic; training concentration when listening and writing.

Apart from through material, strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education is done through habituation and lectures, including:

Ramadhan Short Course Islamic Boarding School

The first habituation in the Ramadhan short course Islamic boarding school activities. Administrator 2 explained that the month of Ramadhan is utilised optimally in LKSA NAD to increase the faith and piety of all components, including administrators, caregivers, and foster children. Worship activities, both sunnah and obligatory, are highly emphasised, with the reward of sunnah worship equal to obligatory worship, and the reward of obligatory worship is multiplied. The atmosphere of Ramadhan, which is full of worship, such as fasting and tarawih, motivates the foster children to be enthusiastic about worship. They can complete the reading of the Qur'an four to five times during the month of Ramadhan. Administrator 2 emphasised that the spirit of worship during Ramadhan is different compared to other months, where children are more diligent and motivated to complete worship well.

The Ramadhan short boarding school activities involve foster children, caregivers, administrators, PCM, and external speakers every year. The activities begin at dawn and are continued with congregational *Fajr* prayers and a short lecture on the virtues of the month of Ramadhan. The children gather in the prayer room for a session until the afternoon, with several activities such as reading the Qur'an and interacting. Each session ends with a prayer. After the *Dhuha* prayer, the second and third sessions involving different speakers are continued, where the children pay serious attention to the material. Approaching breaking the fast, the children gather to read the Qur'an, and when breaking the fast, they read a prayer together. The event continues with Maghrib, *Isha*, and Tarawih prayers, ending with reading the Qur'an before resting. This activity creates an orderly and enthusiastic atmosphere during the holy month.

Obligatory and sunnah worship

The first habit is implementing obligatory sunnah worship such as *Dhuha* prayer, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, and night prayers to strengthen the faith and piety of foster children. *Dhuha* prayer aims to increase the economic spirit of children while fasting on Mondays and Thursdays trains patience. *Lail* prayer, although considered difficult, strengthens children's character and mentality. This worship program does not only apply to foster children but also all members of LKSA, including administrators and caregivers, in order to create togetherness. Through togetherness, all LKSA programs can run well and create independence so that LKSA can stand firm and meet its needs independently.

Administrator 1 emphasises the implementation of obligatory worship, sunnah and prayer with the guidance of a caregiver. The central obligatory worship is the five daily prayers, which children must perform in the prayer room at the beginning of the day, except for the *Dhuhur* prayer, which is held at school. Caregiver 1 monitors the implementation of obligatory prayers by supervising the children in each room. For sunnah worship, children regularly perform the *Dhuha* sunnah prayer, *tahajud*, and care. They were woken up an hour before *Fajr* to pray the *tahajud* prayer with caregiver 1. The *Duha* prayer at school was monitored by caregiver 1 and the Islamic Religious Education teacher. Increasing the practice of prayer is guided by administrator 2, where class A children memorise prayers after obligatory prayers and daily prayers, with guidance from class C seniors. This activity takes place with enthusiasm and affection, creating a positive learning atmosphere among foster children.

The implementation of Monday-Thursday fasting begins with *sahur* together in the dining room, where the foster children gather and say prayers before eating. After *sahur*, they wash the cutlery and prepare for the *Fajr* prayer. Daily activities continue as usual during fasting. Approaching the Maghrib call to prayer, the children gather to break their fast and read books or the Qur'an while waiting for the time to break their fast. After the call to prayer, they read the breaking fast prayer, perform the Maghrib prayer in the congregation, and continue their learning activities.

Dhuha prayers are carried out according to the situation, both at school and in the prayer room, with supervision from administrators and teachers. Children active in *Dhuha* prayers are praised, while those inactive receive coaching. The *tahajud* prayer is performed before dawn

when the children are awakened, when they perform ablution, and when they perform the prayer fervently before praying. Strengthening Islamic religious education values through habituation in Figure 2.

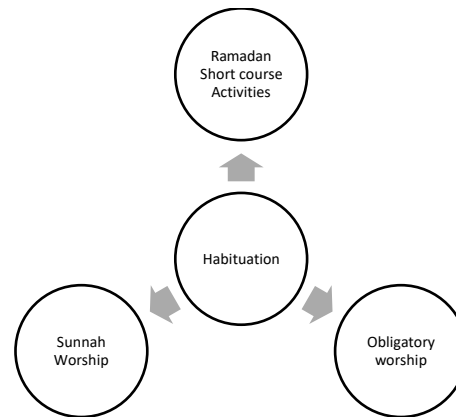


Figure 2. Strengthening the Values of Islamic Religious Education Through Habituation

Islamic Religious Studies

The third habit is holding religious studies. Religious studies are effective in increasing the faith of foster children with the aim of refreshing religious understanding and increasing insight from different sources. Internal religious studies invite external speakers to provide a variety of materials so that foster children do not get bored and can broaden their thinking about religion. In addition, foster children participate in Sunday Morning religious studies at the Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo to increase their insight and practice interaction with the community. Administrator 2 emphasises the importance of strengthening social interaction, so foster children do not feel inferior and can live independently after leaving the orphanage without 24-hour care.

Administrator 1 explained that religious studies at LKSA are held by administrators and external parties, such as PCM and Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo (UMPO). Internal religious studies usually present speakers from Muhammadiyah Branch Management (PCM) or Muhammadiyah Regional Management (PDM) Ponorogo Regency, who are held to welcome Islamic holidays, such as *Mawlid* (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday), *Isra* and *Miraj*, Halal bi halal, and *Nuzulul* Quran. This event takes place in the LKSA prayer room, attended by foster children, administrators, and caregivers, with a time adjusted to the speaker. Participants are served snacks and drinks, ending with a question and answer session. External religious studies, especially the Sunday Morning Religious Studies by UMPO, are held every Sunday from 06.00 to 07.00. The children leave the LKSA office together, showing high enthusiasm, especially if the speaker is well-known, so they come early to get good seats.

The Impact of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values in Developing the Character of Foster Children's Independence

In interviews, foster children at LKSA NAD revealed that the program they were undergoing was very beneficial for their future. However, some initially felt that the program could have been more exciting and tiring. They began to realise the importance of the material taught, especially as preparation for life outside LKSA. Each child had a different view of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material, which was the most important to them. For example, one child felt that memorising the Qur'an provided peace, while another emphasised the importance of the Qur'an, Hadith, *Aqidah*, and *Akhlaq* as a guide to life. Some children preferred to focus on *Fiqh* and *muhadarah* to train concentration and communication.

All administrators and caregivers are involved in strengthening PAI values in LKSA NAD. The independence of foster children is the main focus that is developed, with the strengthening of PAI values as its foundation. According to administrator 1 and administrator 2, this program is

essential because it is sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah and aims to form a solid and focused character in foster children. The positive response from the children shows that they consider the strengthening of PAI values in the development of independence as very important. Several children expressed that although they felt tired following the program, they realised its benefits for independent life after leaving LKSA NAD.

However, there are variations in opinion regarding the PAI material, which is considered the most important. Some consider memorising the Qur'an the primary material, while others emphasise faith, morals, and *Fiqh* more. Most children agree that materials such as milk, Arabic, and mujadara are also crucial for training concentration and communication skills. They all agree that strengthening PAI values is crucial for building character and preparing themselves to face future challenges.

Implications of Foster Children's Independent Character Development

Strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the skills program organised by the Child Welfare Institution (LKSA) NAD significantly impacts foster children's independence. According to the LKSA management, after participating in the program, the children showed higher enthusiasm and motivation to apply PAI values in their daily lives, especially when prepared to work independently. The foster children also felt the real benefits of this program, which increased their enthusiasm for learning the skills taught and made PAI values a guideline in the workplace later.

The independence of foster children can be seen from the development of behavioural autonomy abilities, namely the ability to make decisions independently and be responsible for the consequences. They are increasingly enthusiastic about following the programmed skills and hope to have adequate provisions after completing the foster care period at LKSA. In addition, foster children demonstrate the value of autonomy by understanding and interpreting the principles related to moral and ethical values taught in PAI, such as obeying the laws of halal and haram and making the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith as a guide to life.

Strengthening PAI values in various skills, such as sewing, operating computers, and batik, is seen in foster children who stated that they felt more comfortable and calm when undergoing the program. They can associate the skills learned with PAI values, such as paying attention to halal in the materials used or making the character of the Prophet Muhammad an example in selling. This reflects a change in the emotional bond between foster children and caregivers, where foster children begin to view caregivers as equal individuals, not as authorities who must be obeyed uncritically.

The decision of foster children to prefer to work and develop the skills they have learned at LKSA, despite being offered scholarships to continue their education, shows a high level of independence. They feel responsible for the family's economic condition and prefer to help their parents, which reflects an individualistic attitude and confidence in making decisions. With a democratic parenting pattern, foster children at LKSA NAD can control themselves, interact cooperatively with friends, and cope with stress, so their independence characteristics are increasingly developing (Schofield & Weaver, 2016). Strengthening these PAI values increases emotional and behavioural autonomy and prepares the foundation for more directed and controlled autonomy values, which are essential in facing future challenges. Implications of strengthening Islamic religious education values in developing the independent character of foster children in Figure 3.

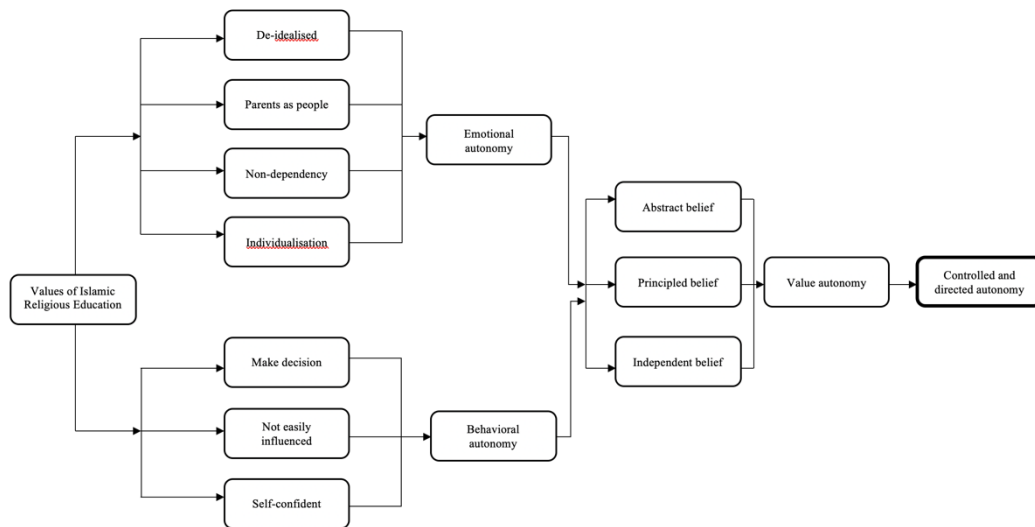


Figure 3. Implications of Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Values in Developing the Independent Character of Foster Children

The Operant Conditioning learning theory developed by B.F. Skinner focuses on how behaviour can be modified through reinforcement and punishment. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at LKSA NAD, applying this theory fosters children's behaviour, which is a gradual response to stimuli (Pelaez & Monlux, 2017). Helleve emphasised the importance of modifying the behaviour of educators towards students to provide feedback that can encourage or correct student behaviour. At LKSA NAD, teaching is focused on modifying educators' attitudes to trigger positive responses from foster children (Helleve et al., 2020).

Masturin and Saxton also support the importance of positive responses from teachers to good student behaviour. In its implementation, teachers provide reinforcement through verbal and non-verbal praise, aiming to increase foster children's participation in learning and encourage them to repeat good behaviour (Masturin, 2012; Saxton, 2015). Skinner argued that punishment could eliminate negative responses without increasing positive behaviour, so in LKSA NAD, punishment is avoided. Instead, children who demonstrate good behaviour, such as attendance and active participation, will receive positive reinforcement, such as praise and rewards. Meanwhile, children who are not disciplined only receive mild reprimands, aiming to encourage them to improve their attitudes without creating fear (Urcelay & Alfei, 2022).

Thompson and Wolpaw added that physical punishment does not support the formation of long-term behaviour and tends to have negative impacts. In learning, PAI values are reinforced in LKSA NAD by providing positive responses to expected behaviour so that foster children are increasingly motivated to learn. With the principle of warmth and enthusiasm, teaching is expected to produce consistent positive responses (Thompson & Wolpaw, 2014). When foster children are praised for good behaviour, such as arriving on time, they tend to repeat the behaviour in the future, which shows the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in learning (Kenny et al., 2015).



Figure 4. *Islamic Religious Education Values that Support Independent Character*

The implementation of strengthening Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in LKSA NAD refers to Thorndike's Behaviouristic theory, which emphasises the relationship between stimulus and response in learning. Educators provide stimuli designed to improve children's abilities in dealing with life's problems (Korzeniowska & Sułkowski, 2020). For this process to be effective, children need to have initial readiness, which includes scheduling PAI materials and grouping children according to their level of formal education. All administrators and caregivers are actively involved in this process, ensuring that children are ready to follow the program by providing learning tools and forming classes according to the activities to be carried out. Before learning begins, a prayer is led by the class leader, which reflects Thorndike's law of readiness principle, namely readiness to act (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Thorndike, 2015). Islamic religious education values that support independent character in Figure 4.

The repetition of material is critical to strengthening PAI values, according to Thorndike's law of exercise. Material that is repeated frequently will be more robust in children's memories (Korzeniowska & Sułkowski, 2020). In practice, caregivers repeat material children have not mastered, such as memorising the Qur'an, and provide opportunities for more capable children to help their friends. This process not only strengthens learning but also builds cooperation among foster children. Consistent repetition helps create strong associations between stimulus and response, essential for effective learning (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Thorndike, 2015).

Thorndike also explained the law of effect, which shows that pleasant consequences strengthen the relationship between stimulus and response. If children receive praise or rewards after correctly answering a question, they will be motivated to repeat the positive behaviour. Conversely, punishment is given to reduce negative behaviour. Praise can be verbal or non-verbal cues that cause pleasure, while punishment can have unpleasant consequences that prevent them from making the same mistake in the future. In addition to worldly rewards, children also get rewards in the form of merit, such as blessings for seeking sustenance, if they carry out their worship properly (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Thorndike, 2015).

Finally, the law of attitude refers to the changes in attitudes experienced by children along with the learning they receive. The interaction between stimulus and response affects the child's ability to make behavioural changes. At LKSA NAD, the learning

process is designed to form individuals with noble morals and positive attitudes in order to develop the character of independence of foster children. The implementation of strengthening PAI values is expected to create a generation that is not only spiritually intelligent but also able to behave well in everyday life.

IV. CONCLUSION

Strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education is carried out through the delivery of materials, habituation, and Islamic Religious studies. Strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is implemented through the delivery of materials, including memorisation of the Qur'an, interpretation, the Qur'an and Hadith, Hadith, *Aqidah Akhlaq*, *Fiqh*, and *Imla*, *Qira'ah* (Recitation), Arabic Language Learning, *Muhadarah* (Speech), Al Islam and Muhammadiyah, *Tartil* Reading the Qur'an. Habituation is carried out with the Ramadhan Short Course Islamic Boarding School, Obligatory and Sunnah worship. Moreover, Islamic Religious Studies are held by administrators and external parties, such as PCM and Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo (UMPO). The program to strengthen the values of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at LKSA NAD plays a vital role in building foster children's independence. Children internalise PAI values that form independent and responsible characters. These values are also associated with practical skills such as sewing and batik, preparing children to face life's challenges. Applying Behaviouristic learning theory, especially Operant Conditioning, reinforces positive behaviour through praise and rewards and avoids harsh punishments. The principle of repeating material and readiness to learn helps children memorise the Qur'an and deepen their understanding of religion and morals. The theoretical implications of applying Behaviouristic theory, especially Operant Conditioning and Thorndike's theory, in Islamic Religious Education learning at LKSA NAD prove that reinforcing positive behaviour through praise and rewards effectively forms independent and religious characters. This supports the theory that a supportive learning environment can reinforce positive attitudes and behaviours. The practical implications of this reinforcement show that internalising Islamic Religious Education values, combined with practical skills such as sewing and batik, prepares foster children to face real life with independence, responsibility, and practical st are relevant for the future.

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