



Integrating Tahfiz Education into Positive Behaviour Development in Early Childhood

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Abstract

The development of positive behaviour in early childhood, particularly in terms of discipline and good manners, faces challenges in maintaining behavioural consistency across school and family environments. This study aims to analyse students' positive behaviour and the factors influencing its development at Tadika Tahfiz Malaysia. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation of students' activities. The data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that students generally demonstrate positive behaviour, particularly in terms of discipline, such as arriving on time, following rules, and participating in activities in an orderly manner, as well as good manners, such as respecting teachers, using polite language, and interacting positively with peers. The development of these behaviours is influenced by teacher role modelling, habituation through routine activities, Tahfiz activities integrated with the internalization of *adab* values, and support from the school and family environments. Behavioural reinforcement is also provided through rewards and educational forms of punishment. However, differences in students' backgrounds and inconsistent support from some parents remain challenges in maintaining positive behaviour. Overall, the study indicates that integrating Tahfiz activities with habituation and the internalization of religious values supports the development of discipline and good manners among young children.

INTRODUCTION

Behaviour is an important aspect of children's development because it reflects an individual's responses to the environment through actions, speech, and attitudes. In the educational context, students' behaviour is an important indicator in the process of character development (Ardita et al., 2023; Warsah et al., 2024). Positive behaviours, particularly discipline and good manners, need to be cultivated from an early age because early childhood represents a critical period of personality and moral development that can influence children's development at later stages (Sakti et al., 2024).

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Early childhood education is not only oriented towards the development of academic abilities but also towards character formation as a foundation for children's social and religious lives. Character education involves the process of instilling moral values, awareness, and habits of behaving appropriately and consistently in everyday life (Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023; Satrial et al., 2025). In this context, discipline refers to children's ability to exercise self-control and follow rules, whereas good manners refer to their ability to interact appropriately and show respect for others (Aini, 2019; Audine et al., 2023). Therefore, discipline and good manners are important dimensions of character development in early childhood.

One educational environment with considerable potential to support the development of positive behaviour is Tahfiz education. Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur is an early childhood education institution that integrates preschool education with Quran memorization activities. This integration is not only directed towards developing academic abilities and memorization skills but also towards cultivating moral character and behaviour in accordance with Islamic values (Fakhrudin et al., 2020). This educational model emphasizes a balance between cognitive development and character formation through habituation, role modelling, and the internalization of religious values in everyday life. Within this process, consistent habituation in the educational environment can serve as an important mechanism for developing positive behaviour, including discipline and good manners (Bahri et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, previous studies on positive behaviour in early childhood tend to address the issue from a relatively fragmented perspective. Several studies have focused on specific aspects, such as discipline or good manners, separately (As-Sya'i et al., 2024; Indrawati et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies specifically examining the development of positive behaviour within Tahfiz education, particularly in Malaysia, remain relatively limited. The Tahfiz educational environment has distinctive characteristics because religious values are integrated into various learning activities and daily routines. This context is therefore important for understanding how Tahfiz-based education contributes to the development of positive behaviour among young children.

The development of positive behaviour is also influenced by various factors originating from children's internal and external environments. Differences in family backgrounds, social influences, and technological developments may affect the consistency of children's behaviour (Nugraha et al., 2025). In addition, limited synergy between the school and family environments may hinder the maintenance of positive behaviours developed at school. From a behaviourist perspective, behaviour is viewed as the result of habituation and reinforcement processes implemented consistently (Zajda, 2021). Meanwhile, social learning theory explains that children learn through observation and imitation of models in their surrounding environment, including teachers as important figures within the school environment (Maulana et al., 2025). These two theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding how habituation, reinforcement, role modelling, and the social environment contribute to children's behavioural development.

Based on the foregoing discussion, there is a need for a more comprehensive examination of students' positive behaviour and the factors influencing its development within the context of Tahfiz education. This study aims to analyse the forms of positive behaviour demonstrated by students at Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur and to identify the factors influencing its development. The study is expected to contribute to the development of early childhood education research, particularly in the area of religious-based character education. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for educators, educational institutions, and parents in developing strategies for habituating and reinforcing discipline and good

manners among young children. Thus, this study provides empirical insights into the development of positive behaviour within a Tahfiz educational environment and broadens the understanding of the integration of religious education and character education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Engkizar, Jaafar, Masuwd, et al., 2025; Satrial et al., 2024). A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' positive behaviour within its natural context without manipulating variables (Takona, 2024). The case study design was used to examine the phenomenon comprehensively within a specific setting, namely Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur, Malaysia, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the development of students' positive behaviour (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

The study was conducted at Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur, Malaysia, over approximately three months, from January to March 2026. The participants consisted of six-year-old students and teachers (*muallimah*) who were directly involved in the learning process and behavioural development. The teachers served as key informants because they had direct and extensive knowledge of the strategies used to develop students' discipline and good manners.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation (Engkizar et al., 2026; Htay et al., 2025; Masani & Fabanjo, 2026). Observations were conducted directly during students' daily activities, both inside and outside the classroom, with particular attention to disciplinary behaviour and good manners across various learning situations. In-depth interviews were conducted with the *muallimah* to explore their understanding of positive behaviour, the strategies used to develop students' behaviour, the factors influencing behavioural development, and the challenges encountered in the process. Documentation was used as supporting data and included activity records, school regulations, and documentation of students' activities relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Anidar et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025). Data collection involved systematically gathering information from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, organizing, and simplifying information relevant to the research objectives. Data were then displayed in descriptive narrative form to facilitate the interpretation of patterns and findings. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the analysed data and relating the findings to relevant theoretical perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Students' Behaviour

The findings obtained through in-depth interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and document analysis indicate that students at Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur generally demonstrate positive behaviour, particularly in terms of discipline and good manners. Based on the observations, students consistently arrived on time, complied with established school rules, and participated in daily activities in an orderly and structured manner. These activities included lining up before entering the classroom, participating attentively in learning activities, and maintaining the cleanliness of the classroom and school environment. These behaviours did not emerge spontaneously but were developed through continuous habituation in students' daily lives at school.

In addition to discipline, good manners were evident in students' interactions with teachers and peers. Students demonstrated respect for their teachers (*muallimah*) by greeting them, listening attentively to instructions, and using polite language when communicating. In their interactions with peers, students also demonstrated mutual respect, avoided disturbing others, and were able to cooperate during group activities. These findings were supported by interview data indicating that positive behaviour was reflected in students' daily habits, such as following instructions, maintaining good manners, and demonstrating responsibility toward themselves and their environment. This is reflected in the following interviews:

...At this school, we really emphasize discipline and good manners. As a result, the students have become accustomed to coming early, following the rules, and carrying out activities in an orderly manner. In terms of manners, they respect their teachers, greet them, listen to instructions, and speak politely (Informant 1). ...In their interactions with one another, I can see that they respect each other, do not disturb one another, and are able to cooperate during group activities. These positive behaviours come from their daily habituation because the students are trained to follow instructions, maintain good manners, and take responsibility for themselves and their surroundings. So, they are not merely following the rules; they are also beginning to understand why good manners are important (Informant 2).

Based on the interviews with the *muallimah*, it can be understood that students' positive behaviour at Tadika Tahfiz is developed through consistent habituation in their daily school activities. The *muallimah* emphasized that discipline and good manners are central to character development, as demonstrated by students' habits of arriving on time, following school rules, and participating in activities in an orderly manner. In terms of courtesy, students demonstrate respect for teachers by greeting them, listening to instructions, and speaking politely. They also interact positively with peers by showing mutual respect, avoiding disruptive behaviour, and cooperating in group activities.

Furthermore, the *muallimah* explained that these positive behaviours are not merely expressions of compliance with school rules but are accompanied by students' growing understanding of the importance of good manners in everyday life. Thus, the behaviours observed among the students have begun to develop into forms of internalized awareness. These findings indicate that positive behaviour at Tadika Tahfiz is developed through habituation, role modelling, and continuous value internalization (Adel et al., 2024; Delviany et al., 2024; Mahira et al., 2024). The forms of positive behaviour identified in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Students' Positive Behaviour

Behavioural Aspect	Indicator	Field Findings
Discipline	Punctuality	Most students arrived before the activities began.
Discipline	Compliance with school rules	Students followed school regulations appropriately.
Discipline	Orderliness in activities	Students lined up and participated in learning activities in an orderly manner.
Good manners	Respect for teachers	Students greeted teachers and listened to them attentively.
Good manners	Polite communication	Students used polite language when communicating.
Good manners	Social interaction	Students interacted positively with their peers.

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that students' positive behaviour can be categorized into two main aspects: discipline and good manners. Discipline was

reflected in punctuality, compliance with school regulations, and orderly participation in activities. Meanwhile, good manners were reflected in students' respect for teachers, polite communication, and positive interactions with peers.

The development of these positive behaviours was closely associated with the strategies consistently implemented by teachers. The findings indicate that the main strategies included habituation, role modelling, advice, and reinforcement through rewards and educational punishment. Habituation was implemented through structured daily routines, such as reciting daily prayers, participating in brief *tazkiarah* sessions, lining up before activities, and engaging in group activities that encouraged cooperation and responsibility. These routines were repeatedly implemented to internalize positive values and develop them into habitual behaviours among students.



Fig 1. Learning Activities

Figure 1 shows students participating in a line-up activity before the learning session begins. The activity includes reciting prayers, singing songs, making a pledge, and listening to brief messages from teachers concerning moral values and daily announcements. The figure also shows learning activities involving reading, writing, and numeracy combined with interactive thematic activities. Through these activities, students are not only encouraged to develop cognitive skills but are also habituated to demonstrate discipline, cooperation, and an understanding of positive values in everyday life.

The development of behaviour through habituation is consistent with behaviourist theory, which emphasizes that individual behaviour develops through the relationship between stimulus and response reinforced over time. According to B. F. Skinner, behaviour can be shaped through reinforcement, whereby responses followed by positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated and eventually become habitual (Le Pelley et al., 2024). In the educational context, habituation can function as a stimulus that is consistently provided to students, thereby generating desired responses such as discipline and good manners.

This finding is consistent with studies indicating that learning becomes more effective when it is supported by continuous habituation and reinforcement within a conducive environment (Puspita & Harfiani, 2024; Tyas et al., 2026). Therefore, the positive behaviours observed among students can be understood as the result of continuous learning processes occurring through their interactions with the school environment.

Furthermore, the application of behaviourist principles in early childhood education emphasizes the importance of structured routines as a means of developing behaviour. Activities such as lining up, reciting prayers, and participating in reading, writing, and numeracy activities that are conducted repeatedly function as stimuli that encourage responses in the form of discipline, responsibility, and

cooperation. Reinforcement provided by teachers, whether through praise or educational reprimands, plays an important role in strengthening these behaviours (Amiruddin et al., 2022). Previous research has also demonstrated that consistent habituation can significantly support children's social and moral development (Asmy & Rahimah, 2025). Therefore, the positive behaviours identified in this study, including discipline, good manners, cooperation, and responsibility, reflect the development of behaviour through habituation consistent with the principles of behaviourist theory in character education.

Factors Influencing Students' Behaviour

In addition to the strategies and habituation implemented at school, the findings indicate that students' behaviour is influenced by several factors originating from both the school and external environments. One of the most influential factors is teacher role modelling. Teachers do not merely function as instructors but also serve as behavioural models who are observed and imitated by students in their daily lives. Teachers' polite, patient, disciplined, and respectful attitudes provide concrete examples that students can observe and imitate. This finding is consistent with social learning theory, which states that individuals learn through observation and imitation of models within their environment (Audine et al., 2023). Therefore, the successful development of positive behaviour depends considerably on teachers' consistency in demonstrating appropriate behaviour.

Another important factor is the use of rewards and educational punishment to reinforce positive behaviour. Rewards are provided in the form of praise, recognition, or simple gifts to encourage students to repeat desirable behaviours. Meanwhile, punishment is applied in mild and educational forms, such as verbal reprimands or *time-out*, with the purpose of increasing students' awareness without causing fear or trauma. This approach is consistent with behaviourist theory, which explains that behaviour can be shaped through positive and negative reinforcement applied consistently (Zajda, 2021). The strategies used to develop positive behaviour are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Strategies for Developing Positive Behaviour

Strategy	Form of Implementation	Purpose
Habituation	Daily prayers, <i>tazkirah</i> , and routine activities	To develop positive habits
Role modelling	Teachers demonstrate positive behaviour	To provide direct examples
Advice	Reprimands and guidance	To guide students' behaviour
Reward	Praise, small gifts, and picture stamps	To increase motivation
Educational punishment	<i>Time-out</i> and mild reprimands	To provide educational consequences without violence

Within the context of Tahfiz education, the findings also indicate that the Quran memorization program contributes to students' character development. Tahfiz activities do not merely develop memorization skills but also cultivate values such as patience, discipline, responsibility, and good manners in everyday life. Students are trained to remain consistent in memorizing the Quran, maintain concentration, and manage their time, which indirectly supports the development of disciplined behaviour. In addition, the values contained in the Quran provide moral reinforcement that supports the development of courteous behaviour. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that religious value-based education contributes significantly to the development of students' character and moral conduct (Fakhruddin et al., 2020; Mariam et al., 2023).



Fig 2. Quran Recitation and Congregational Prayer

Figure 2 shows students reciting the Quran and performing congregational prayer. These activities are part of the daily Tahfiz program and serve as forms of religious habituation aimed at cultivating religious values and discipline among students.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the development of positive behaviour is influenced not only by factors within the school but also by external factors, particularly the family environment and peer relationships. Parental support in reinforcing discipline and good manners at home is an important factor in maintaining the consistency of students' behaviour. Students who receive support and supervision from their parents tend to demonstrate more stable behaviour than those who receive less attention within the family environment. Peer groups also exert considerable influence because children tend to imitate behaviours that they observe within their social environment. This finding is consistent with the view that children's behavioural development is strongly influenced by social interaction and their surrounding environment (Nugraha et al., 2025). This is reflected in the following interview:

...Discipline and good manners can certainly be developed at school, but the role of parents at home is also very important. I have noticed that students who receive support from their families tend to be more consistent because they are already accustomed to these practices at home, making it easier for them to follow them at school. However, when they receive less attention, it is more difficult to maintain those behavioural changes. In addition, their friends also have a significant influence because students tend to imitate what they see. Therefore, their social interactions also have an impact on their behaviour (Informant 3).

Based on this interview, it can be understood that the development of students' positive behaviour is not solely influenced by the school's role but also by family support and peer influence. Students who receive attention and guidance from their parents tend to demonstrate greater consistency in maintaining positive behaviour. Meanwhile, their social environment also contributes to behavioural development because children tend to imitate what they observe in their everyday social interactions. This finding is consistent with social learning theory, which explains that individual behaviour develops through observation and imitation (*modelling*) of the surrounding environment, as well as through interactions among behavioural, cognitive, and environmental factors (Amsari et al., 2024).

In addition, the study identified several challenges in developing and maintaining students' positive behaviour. Differences in family backgrounds constitute one of the main factors influencing the consistency of students' discipline and good manners. The development of technology and media may also have negative effects when it is not accompanied by adequate supervision. Furthermore, inconsistency between educational practices at school and at home presents a

challenge in maintaining the positive behaviours that have been developed within the school environment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the development of students' positive behaviour at Tadika Tahfiz Negeri Pahang Tanjung Lumpur occurs systematically and continuously through the integration of habituation, teacher role modelling, advice, reinforcement, and religious values within learning and Tahfiz activities. Positive behaviours, particularly discipline and good manners, are reflected in students' punctuality, compliance with school rules, orderly participation in activities, respect for teachers, polite communication, and positive interactions with peers. The development of these behaviours is influenced not only by strategies implemented at school but also by teacher role modelling, Tahfiz activities, parental support, and peer relationships. Thus, the findings suggest that the Tahfiz educational environment provides a supportive context for character development through continuous habituation and the internalization of religious values.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that positive behaviour development in early childhood is best understood as a continuous process of value internalization rather than merely the enforcement of behavioural rules. In the context of Tadika Tahfiz, character formation is embedded within everyday educational practices, allowing religious values to become part of children's behavioural development. The findings suggest that the distinctive contribution of Tahfiz education lies in its ability to connect religious learning with the formation of everyday character. This integration provides a contextual environment in which moral values can be experienced, practiced, and gradually internalized by children. At the same time, the sustainability of this process depends on continuity between educational practices at school, family support, and the wider social environment. Thus, the study highlights the importance of viewing early childhood character education as a shared and continuous process rather than a responsibility of the school alone. The findings provide a basis for strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and families in developing religiously grounded character education. Future research may examine how school–family partnerships can be developed systematically across different Tahfiz and early childhood education contexts.

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